

# PUBLISHED VERSION

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*Series: The Role of Linguists in Indigenous Community Language Programs in Australia*<sup>1</sup>

## Reclaiming the Kaurna language: a long and lasting collaboration in an urban setting

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A long-running collaboration between Kaurna people and linguists in South Australia began in 1989 with a songbook. Following annual community workshops and the establishment of teaching programs, the author embarked on a PhD to research historical sources and an emerging modern language based on these sources. In response to numerous requests for names, translations and information, together with Kaurna Elders Lewis O'Brien and Alitya Rigney, the author and others formed Kaurna Warra Pintyandi (KWP) in 2002. It is a monthly forum where researchers, and others interested in Kaurna language, can meet with Kaurna people to discuss their concerns. KWP, based at the University of Adelaide, is not incorporated and attendance of meetings is voluntary. The committee has gained a measure of credibility and respect from the Kaurna community, government departments and the public and has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Adelaide. However, KWP and the author sit, uneasily at times, at the intersection between the University and the community. This paper explores the nature of collaboration between Kaurna people and researchers through KWP in the context of reliance on historical documentation, much of which is open to interpretation. Linguistics provides some of the skills needed for interpretation of source materials. This is complemented by knowledge held by Kaurna people that is known through oral history, spirituality and intuition.

**1. COLLABORATION.** The documentation of the Kaurna language of South Australia in the nineteenth century began in 1838 with a collaboration of sorts between the Dresden missionaries Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann (1840) and Kaurna men including Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna and Ityamaitpinna, who were in fact the leaders within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide in the 1830s-1840s (Amery 2000a: 57-63; Amery 2004; Gara, 1998). A third missionary, Samuel Klose, established close relationships with the children at the school at Piltawodli. There was a strong bond between the missionaries and the Kaurna people at that time, to the extent that the Kaurna Elders divulged insider information to the missionaries. There were, however, some major and irreconcilable differences between the Kaurna Elders and the missionaries when it came to matters of belief and religion. Kaurna people today have often pointed to the trust and understanding that must have existed between their ancestors and the missionaries as an explanation for the extent and quality of information that has been recorded.

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<sup>1</sup> This series of papers, *The Role of Linguists in Indigenous Community Language Programs in Australia*, is edited by John Henderson, University of Western Australia.

Of course language documentation has not always been undertaken in such collaborative circumstances. It has often been the case in the past that Aboriginal people have been treated merely as subjects without any acknowledgement whatsoever. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009: 20-23) refers to this as the linguist-focussed model. However, this is no longer the case and linguists nowadays acknowledge the linguistic rights of Aboriginal peoples and generally adhere to a strict code of ethics (see Australian Linguistic Society n.d.). Codes for ethical research have also been adopted elsewhere throughout the world, as outlined by Rice (2010).

In their guide to language revival planning, Paton & Eira (2011: 5) make a strong case for meaningful collaboration between Aboriginal communities and linguists and for achieving a balance between what they refer to as an “academic approach” and a “community approach” to language work. Gerdts (2010) explores in some detail the role of the linguist in language revitalisation drawing primarily on her experiences in British Columbia. Her discussion resonates with our experiences in South Australia. This paper examines my role as a linguist involved in Kurna Warra Pintyanthi (KWP), a monthly forum where researchers, and others interested in Kurna language, can meet with Kurna people to discuss their concerns. Through this we believe that we have largely achieved a good balance between an academic and a community driven approach, notwithstanding the fact that KWP is located within a university setting. However, we are still working towards increased Kurna involvement and capacity-building. In this paper I describe the development of KWP – identifying the people, institutions, programs and activities that form the complex language ecology of Kurna – and explore the role of a university-based linguist working in collaboration with community members.

**2. THE ROLE OF LINGUISTS IN LANGUAGE RECLAMATION.** The role of linguists in the revival of Aboriginal languages is discussed throughout Paton & Eira (2011), in the context of British Columbia by Gerdts (2010) and in the reclamation of Kurna in Amery (2000a) and Amery & Rigney (2007: 25). The views of several Kurna people towards linguists are quoted in Amery (2000a: 240-241) whilst Walsh (2003: 116) surveys Aboriginal attitudes towards linguists in New South Wales. In language reclamation, the focus of linguistic work is directed away from documentation (a primary role for linguists working in language centres in the Kimberley or Northern Territory for instance) towards retrieval and interpretation of historical documentation. Interpretation of historical source materials is greatly aided by knowledge of handwriting conventions (see Troy 1995), knowledge of terms used in classical grammars, a knowledge of Australian Aboriginal languages and linguistics (including phonology, lexical patterns, lexical semantics, pragmatics<sup>2</sup>, morphology, syntax and discourse) and a knowledge of

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<sup>2</sup> An instance where knowledge of the pragmatics of Aboriginal languages proved to be crucial occurred in the interpretation of Berndt & Vogelsang's (1940) Ngadjuri wordlist where they had cited *ne!* as meaning ‘no! (refusal)’. This was at variance with one of the other Ngadjuri sources (Le Brun 1886) which records *nee* ‘yes’. LeBrun's *nee* ‘yes’ is corroborated by Kurna *ne /nhii/* and Adnyamathanha *nhiikali* ‘oh? Is that so? (so I believe)’. In Waria-Read et al (2009: 71) I wrote “Looks like Berndt & Vogelsang are in error. They could have asked Barney a question like ‘You’re not

comparative linguistics and the principles of historical reconstruction. See Amery (2013) for a detailed discussion of issues arising in the interpretation of Kurna historical materials. In the Kurna case, much of this work on the source material was done in my PhD project (1995-1998), though previously undiscovered sources and information are still coming to light and there is still much to be learned about the history of place-names. Chester Schultz is currently undertaking detailed and meticulous research on Kurna placenames in a concerted attempt to identify names and information about those names, which is likely to have come from Kurna people themselves (Schultz 2011). Schultz seeks advice from me and other linguists on linguistic aspects of this research.

Another major task for the linguist working with ‘sleeping’ languages is in rebuilding and re-packaging the language in a form that is useful to present-day learners, teachers and users of the language. This entails developing a practical orthography, filling lexical gaps and engineering new terms, reconstructing aspects of morphology and syntax, sometimes by analogy with the grammar of other Aboriginal languages, and constructing new texts. These are the corpus planning aspects of the linguist’s role and are done in collaboration with the owners/custodians of the language. These are discussed in some detail in Amery (2000a: 114-152) and Amery (2001). A major undertaking in this respect was the writing of a comprehensive 250-page learner’s guide (Amery & Simpson 2007, 2013) which was undertaken over several years and in close collaboration with many Kurna people. Profiles and quotes from twenty Kurna people are included at the beginning of this resource. A CD accompanies the learner’s guide with 15 PowerPoint presentations with embedded sound files. All sound files were recorded by Kurna people working at the direction of a linguist. Part A of the learner’s guide provides tips on learning languages, linguistic terminology (including terms used in the historical sources), spelling and pronunciation, constructing sentences, naming practices and introduces useful expressions for use in a range of situations (introductory utterances, talking about space and time, talking with friends, in the home, talking with children, talking with Elders, football and fishing). Part B is focussed more on explaining Kurna grammar and interpretation of the historical source material. Needless to say, quite a few new terms needed to be developed, especially in relation to the use of Kurna in the home and for talking about football and fishing. Some of this terminology had previously been developed in the context of Kurna workshops, especially the Kurna Warra Pintyandi workshops (Amery & Gale 2000). Other terms were developed in language courses involving Kurna people. For instance, the dialogue in the ‘Talking with Children’ chapter was devised in the context of the Kurna class at Warriparinga when Georgina Williams brought her grandchild to class. The dialogue revolved around their situation and the kinds of conversation that might take place in her household. *Murla murla* ‘towel’ (literally ‘dry dry’) was suggested by Steve Gadlabarti Goldsmith (as opposed to my earlier suggestion of *murlapiti* ‘dry causing thing’). Much of the new terminology and expressions, however, were developed by the young Kurna language workers working together with me to develop the resource.

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coming with us?’ If he wasn’t coming, he would answer *nhii* ‘yes’ to the proposition that he is not coming. In standard English the answer would be ‘No!’”

Trent Wanganeen really enjoyed devising names (mostly translations) for the Australian Football League teams (eg *Kuinyunta Miyurna* (lit. ‘sacred/taboo men’) for the St Kilda Saints and *Mapurna* (lit. ‘quolls’ – cat-like marsupials) for the Geelong Cats). Metalinguistic terminology, such as *yitpiwarra* ‘meaning’ (lit. seed-word), *wapiwarra* ‘verb’ (lit. do-word), and *wapiwarrarla karrpa* ‘complex sentence’ (lit. verb-DUAL sentence), was developed during a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) workshop for chapter headings of the Kurna Learner’s Guide.

Along with linguists everywhere working with Aboriginal communities comes the task of grant submission writing, grant administration, project management, training and mentoring Aboriginal language workers and lobbying for support for Aboriginal languages.

Another set of tasks faced by linguists are requests for names, translations and information from owners and custodians of the language, as well as from schools, government departments and members of the public. Of course where the language is still spoken fluently, such as Arrernte in Alice Springs, it makes sense to refer these requests directly to speakers/custodians of the language. In language reclamation contexts however, even if the owners/custodians or the local language centre is approached, often the requests are referred on to the linguist who has a greater knowledge of the historical source material and how to fulfil the request, especially if a translation is needed. Requests of this nature are much more frequent if the language is located in a large metropolitan city, as in the case of Kurna. In fact as we shall see, it was these requests that gave rise to KWP.

**3. THE LOCATION OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND REVITALISATION PROGRAMS.** Language centres and Aboriginal community organisations are the norm for the focus of Aboriginal language maintenance and revitalisation programs in Australia. The Kimberley Language Resource Centre (2010) was the first regional language centre to be established in 1984 (incorporated in 1985). A network of language centres soon sprang up around the country. In south-eastern Australia the Murrumbidgee Cooperative was established soon after in 1986 (Walsh 2010: 103) whilst Yaitya Warra Wodli, a language centre serving the state of South Australia, was established in 1993. In contrast to the Kimberley Language Centre and Murrumbidgee (Ash et al. 2010, Walsh 2001), Yaitya Warra Wodli has been a dismal failure (McConvell et al. 2001), defunded in 2004 (Senate 2005: 11-12) and with little to show for its ten years or so of operation.<sup>3</sup> Despite the Kurna name meaning ‘Indigenous language house’, Yaitya Warra Wodli did little for the Kurna language. In the early 1990s it begrudgingly granted \$2,000 of Commonwealth government funding to Kurna Plains School in acrimonious circumstances. It was always antagonistic towards linguists. The ineffectiveness of Yaitya Warra Wodli and the preoccupation of Kurna organisations with other matters together with a particular set of circumstances led the Kurna language movement in a different direction. The Kurna language movement is perhaps unique in Australia in that a quasi-community Aboriginal language organisation has taken root within a university,

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<sup>3</sup> There seem to be no known Yaitya Warra Wodli publications produced during the life of the organisation.

emerging in 2002 after more than a decade of concerted language revival activity. KWP's status as a university-based quasi-community organisation is possibly why it is not listed, at the time of writing, in the Language Organisation Directory maintained by the Federation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC 2010-11). This is surprising as KWP has undertaken translation tasks for FATSILC in the past (KWP Minutes, 26 October 2005) and has been involved in language work for a longer period of time than some of the six organisations listed for South Australia, none of them concerned with Kurna language.

Whilst it is hard to identify a parallel case in Australia where a university is the focus of an Aboriginal language revival program, there are close parallels elsewhere. The Myaamia Project for Language Revitalization is based at Miami University, Ohio. In this case, however, a Native American, Daryl Baldwin, serves as Director, whereas I, a non-Indigenous linguist, convene KWP. But as with Kurna, there is a close collaboration with non-Native American academics at Miami University. The Hawai'ian language revitalization program also has a very strong presence within the University of Hawai'i. One of the main proponents in the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Pila Wilson, is non-Hawai'ian though he has a number of Hawai'ian language activist colleagues who are also employed at the University as academics.

The following sections chronicle the story of the emergence of KWP and the associated partnership between linguists and other researchers with members of the Kurna community. It is a story of relationships, of mutual respect and trust and of a growing understanding of what each of the parties bring to the relationship and take from the relationship.

**4. EARLY BEGINNINGS: COLLABORATION FROM THE START.** Kurna language reclamation began as a small part of a local languages project initiated by the pooling of National Aboriginal Languages Program (NALP) funding obtained by the Principal of Kurna Plains School, Ngarrpadla Alitya Rigney, and Greg Wilson on behalf of Croydon Primary School. Through this funding an experienced non-Aboriginal teacher-linguist, Kathryn Gale, was employed to work alongside Nunga<sup>4</sup> language workers Ngarrpadla Josie Agius, Nelson (Snooky) Varcoe and Liz Rigney. At the same time Ron Lister, based in the Noarlunga regional office obtained education department funds and employed me as teacher-linguist for the southern metropolitan region. I worked alongside existing Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) including Peter Bertani. These efforts covered two other local languages as well as Kurna. These two (or three) projects joined forces and combined resources to form a more substantial and feasible project, the Ngarrindjeri, Narrunga and Kurna Languages Project. So from the outset partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were operating at all levels from project management (between Alitya Rigney, Wilson and Lister) to work on the ground (Agius, Varcoe, Liz Rigney, Gale and myself). This language team brought together people with different skills. Agius was an AEW with many years experience working in schools and a vast network of connections within the Nunga community in

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<sup>4</sup> A general term for Indigenous people in the area, regardless of specific language group.

Adelaide. Her connections went back to Point Pearce in Narungga country and she had a strong identification with the Narungga, Ngadjuri and Kurna groups. Varcoe, a talented songwriter, musician and artist, also grew up at Point Pearce but had Ngarrindjeri ancestry and identified more closely as Ngarrindjeri. Liz Rigney was Ngarrindjeri through and through, having grown up at Raukkan in Ngarrindjeri country.

Following awareness raising workshops, a fieldtrip to Alice Springs and the drafting of departmental policy for Aboriginal languages, the Ngarrindjeri, Narrunga and Kurna Languages Project embarked on a Songwriters' Workshop, held at Tandanya, the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute located in Adelaide. Once again, partnerships between local Aboriginal talent and non-Aboriginal expertise were forged. The team, identified above, engaged the services of ethnomusicologist and composer Chester Schultz, musician and songwriter specialising in children's songs Leigh Newton, and musician Cathy McGrath, to work with interested people from the local Aboriginal community. Ruby Hammond, Marten Stewart and Nugget Rankine came forward. The Songwriters project was a wonderful collaboration between Aboriginal community people, some of whom had previous training at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM), working together with Nunga language workers, musicians, composers, songwriters and linguists.

For the Kurna language this was the first time that any novel sentences had been put together since the demise of the language, perhaps with the death of Ivaritji in 1929 or maybe even earlier than that. See Amery (2000a: 64-72) for further details.

Following the Songwriters' Workshop, I held Kurna language workshops in mid-1990, 1991 and 1992. These workshops were hosted by Kurna Plains School (1990 and 1992) and by the early childhood sector at the premises of the Aboriginal TAFE in Wakefield Street, central Adelaide in 1991.

**5. ESTABLISHING KAURNA COURSES IN THE MID-1990s.** When Kurna was introduced to Kurna Plains School (KPS) in 1992, it was introduced by the Principal, Ngarpadla Alitya Rigney, assisted by Nelson Varcoe. In those early days, all staff at KPS were involved in the delivery of the Kurna program, including non-Aboriginal teacher Jamie Parkin and later Kevin Duigan. I continued to assist by helping to devise useful expressions and terminology and translating songs or checking the translations of songs undertaken by teachers and Aboriginal students at KPS. In July 1997 a list of common expressions, including 'Empty the rubbish bin!', was presented to me for translation (see Amery 2000a: 136, 143).

When Kurna was introduced as a senior secondary level program in 1994 at Elizabeth City High School and Elizabeth West Adult Campus, a team approach was taken as advocated in the Australian Indigenous Languages Framework (SSABSA 1996). Cherie Watkins and Nelson Varcoe were appointed to work alongside non-Aboriginal teacher Jennifer Simpson and myself as linguist. Simpson assisted with program planning and took responsibility for administration of the program and student management. I worked closely with Watkins and Varcoe to increase their knowledge of the Kurna language and to produce needed phrases and translations. With encouragement from the Principal, teachers from KPS participated in Kurna classes run by Nelson Varcoe and Cherie Watkins at Para West Adult Campus.

The team approach was always envisaged as a stop-gap measure to enable the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the absence of trained Aboriginal teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach languages. The ultimate goal should be to empower people to teach their own languages in their own right. Hence the importance of encouraging young people with an interest in language teaching to become trained teachers and for providing recognised courses that will impart the skills to teach Aboriginal languages. The Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Certificate courses at level III and IV 'Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language' and 'Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language' have been designed by Mary-Anne Gale to provide these skills. A TAFE Certificate III course was offered to Kurna students throughout 2012 and early 2013 with nine students successfully completing the course. Two Kurna adults are now undertaking the Certificate IV course which requires placement within a teaching program. Discussions are ongoing with the Department of Education and Children's Services and with the South Australian Teacher's Registration Board to recognise successful completion of these courses as a suitable qualification for restricted registration as a teacher of Aboriginal languages.

**6. THE PHD PROJECT.** In 1995 I embarked on a PhD project, investigating on the one hand historical sources, and on the other the incipient revival of the language and emerging uses over the period 1980-1998. This project was undertaken in close collaboration with Kurna people. At the time, I was involved in the teaching of the newly established Kurna programs at Para West Adult Campus (formerly Elizabeth West Adult Campus) and Elizabeth City High School. During this period I also assisted in the introduction of the Kurna language component of the Aboriginal Culture and Tourism Instructors Course at Tauondi College and introduced a Kurna course taught through TAFE at Warriparinga to members of the Kurna community. I worked alongside Kurna teachers and worked closely with a range of community members, some of whom were students in the newly established programs. Numerous interviews were conducted with Kurna people in the course of my PhD focusing on language and identity issues and views on the learning, teaching and use of Kurna.

In the final stages of completing my PhD, I gave a small group of senior Kurna people the right of veto over the contents of the thesis. This group consisted of Lewis O'Brien, Alitya Rigney, Lester Irabinna Rigney, Georgina Williams and Veronica Brodie. From an academic perspective, this was a somewhat risky strategy, but it ensured that the thesis was written with Kurna people, not just about Kurna people and their language (see Czaykowska-Higgins 2009: 24-25). From the perspective of academia there could be objections that this threatens the objectivity of the work. I was not an observer simply looking in from the outside. On the contrary, I was deeply involved in all aspects of Kurna language work and Kurna language politics. My supervisors were well aware of the role I played in Kurna language work at the time and knew about the power of veto I had vested in the hands of Kurna people. There was no reaction from the University.

Throughout the course of the PhD, I wrote several letters (3rd April 1995, 8th August 1995, 21 Aug. 1995, 16th Nov. 1995, 18th June 1996) to the various Chairs of the Kurna Aboriginal Community and Heritage Association (KACHA), a peak Kurna community organisation. These letters were in regard to Kurna language programs being set up, cop-



wright of Kurna language materials, the introduction of new words into the language, the use of Kurna language in Kurna meetings and various other issues, but never received a reply. However, the TAFE Kurna course at Warriparinga in 1996 was taught at the invitation of Paul Dixon, then Chair of KACHA, though this course was short-lived due to factional disputes within KACHA. A close working relationship was never forged with the peak Kurna organisations which were always more concerned with land issues and heritage sites. Rather, closer ties were formed and maintained with Kurna people working within education and non-aligned individuals with a keen interest in the language for its own sake.

**7. KAURNA WARRA PINTYANTHI<sup>5</sup> (KWP).** In 2000 Mary-Anne Gale and I conducted a series of workshops, funded through a small University of Adelaide internal research grant, with members of the Kurna community to develop expressions for talking with babies and young children. I came up with the idea for the project, but it clearly resonated with many Kurna people. These workshops were titled *Kurna Warra Pintyandi* ‘creating Kurna language’. Workshops were re-convened in September 2002 under the title ‘Kurna Protocols: Cultural Renewal through Language Development and Enrichment’ to work on Kurna funeral protocols. Interest in this topic had been flagged by Kurna participants in the previous project (Amery & Gale 2000: 20-21). At the conclusion of the language protocol workshops, the group was united in their desire to continue meeting on a monthly basis to address the requests for Kurna names, translations and information, to work on Kurna projects and to promote the Kurna language. Initially we just met together primarily to work on Kurna protocols for welcomes and acknowledgements in Kurna language, but requests for names and translations kept coming so we discussed them with the group. No thought was given to naming the group until after a few meetings the need for a name became apparent. At the suggestion of Kevin Duigan (teacher from Kurna Plains School), the name Kurna Warra Pintyandi was adopted following its prior use as the name for workshops held in 2000, though we had also used the name before that on an application for funds lodged by Lewis O’Brien and I to the Adelaide City Council. Nelson Varcoe designed our logo which was approved at the meeting held on 22 October 2003 (KWP Minutes). So, after a long gestation, KWP was finally fully established. Whilst some might try to consult with KWP for permission to use the Kurna shield emblem or on various other matters, KWP, as a body, restricts itself to language-related matters.

KWP serves a number of functions, both corpus planning and status planning outlined in Amery & Rigney (2007: 23-24). The monitoring role of KWP is discussed in more detail in Amery (2010). Importantly, KWP provides a forum whereby any member of the public or representative from a government department, school, business, environment group, church, sports association, reconciliation group or whoever, may come and meet with Kurna people and researchers with the most knowledge and expertise in the Kurna language.

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<sup>5</sup> The spelling *pintyanthi* is used in the most recently published language materials, vs *pintyandi*.

KWP is open to all Kaurna people, though as yet there is no formal membership procedure. Several Kaurna people are regular attendees. Others attend less regularly, but identify closely with the aims and work of KWP. A number of non-Kaurna people also attend regularly or semi-regularly. They might also be regarded as members, though in a different sense. These non-Kaurna attendees are all strong supporters of the Kaurna language movement and have a range of expertise to share with the group. Many are engaged in working on Kaurna language projects, some of which were initiated from outside, others identified as a need through the teaching of Kaurna, but all discussed and approved at KWP meetings. Chester Schultz has been KWP's primary placenames researcher since early 2007. Christine Brown is producing Kaurna radio shows, a project funded by the Federal Government Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program since 2010. Jasmin Morley is engaged in writing a Kaurna language curriculum with funding from the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) and a Kaurna Dictionary project also funded (2011-2012) through the ILS scheme. Gerhard Rüdiger worked with KWP to organise the visit of a Kaurna/Ngarrindjeri delegation to Germany to attend the 175th anniversary of the formation of the Dresden Mission Society in August 2011. He is currently working on the KWP website and is undertaking administrative tasks for KWP working together with Kaurna employee Taylor Power-Smith. Mary-Anne Gale worked with the group again in the delivery of the TAFE Certificate III in 'Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language (Kaurna) in 2012' and early 2013 and is teaching and mentoring several Kaurna students through the Certificate IV 'Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language (Kaurna)' in 2013-2014. She is also working alongside Jack Kanya Buckskin to update Kaurna language resources. A second edition of the Kaurna Alphabet Book with revised spelling was recently published (KWP 2013).

All non-Kaurna 'members' understand clearly that our place is to provide advice, share our expertise and work towards building capacity amongst the Kaurna people. If it comes to making decisions where opinion is divided, then these decisions are made by Kaurna people and Kaurna people alone (Amery & Rigney 2007: 25). Occasionally decisions are made which go against the linguistic advice offered. For instance at the insistence of Ngarrpadla Alitya Rigney, KWP refused to participate in the Shared Responsibility Agreement funding (KWP Minutes 26 October 2005), and Lewis O'Brien would not think of returning to the original plan in the dual-naming of city squares (KWP Minutes, January 2012). Certain aspects of decisions made in relation to the new revised orthography were not according to my advice: where I would have preferred to use voiceless stop symbols throughout instead of a mixed system with voiced symbols for pre-stopping, and I would have eliminated the diphthongs *au* and *ai* before *w* and *y* respectively. But these decisions are accepted by all.

Who speaks on behalf of KWP? For many purposes when a formal letter is sent from KWP, O'Brien, Rigney and I sign. If the matter is concerned with Aboriginal politics, however, sometimes letters are sent in O'Brien's and Rigney's names only. If it is a matter of providing straightforward information, then correspondence is often sent by me alone, as convener of KWP. When KWP gave evidence at the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Language Learning in Indigenous Communities (House of Representatives 2012), Rigney, Buckskin and I were invited to attend and present.

Over the years, both Kurna people and linguists/researchers have come to appreciate and understand each other more and more. The Kurna members of KWP have gained considerable knowledge and understanding of linguistics. In meetings when a translation of a sentence or longer text is undertaken they will demand an “interlinear gloss” so that they can see how the translation has been produced. They have come to understand a range of pronominal forms, case suffixes and verb inflections. Whilst they do not have a full knowledge of Kurna grammar or a detailed understanding of linguistics, they do understand its importance and know what linguistics has to offer.<sup>6</sup> They realize that a well-researched corpus applying the analytical tools that linguistics provides can help to make their language strong. On the other hand, researchers involved with KWP appreciate more and more the knowledge, wisdom, experience and judgement that Kurna people bring.

**8. THE DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS.** A steadily growing number of requests to me and others led to the formation of KWP. The volume of requests has continued to grow with up to 12 or 15 items sometimes appearing on the monthly agenda. At least 572 requests have been addressed by KWP over ten years since its establishment (Rüdiger 2012) and most of these in the last five years. Some of these requests are quick and easy, others are long and tortuous. For example, a request from the City of Holdfast Bay discussed in the January 2012 and March 2012 meetings took up more than half of the three-hour meeting in March. This request was in fact initiated on 1 December 2011 with numerous e-mails back and forth between Jenni Reynolds (City of Holdfast Bay), Matthew Wright-Simon (Ecocreative consultants), Yvonne Allen (local Holdfast Bay historian and researcher), Chester Schultz (KWP placenames researcher), Lewis Yerloburka O’Brien (Kurna Elder) and myself (linguist). A ten-page document and a detailed interpretive map have been sent back and forth for revision. Numerous difficult and thorny issues were thrown up by this project and the work had to be done in a rush to meet City of Holdfast Bay timelines and deadlines.

In the early years, requests for names, translations and information were addressed with no thought of payment for service. As the number of requests increased, KWP suggested that the body lodging the request consider making a donation. In August 2006 KWP established a fee structure, though many requests, such as those made by a Kurna person or coming from the reconciliation movement, are not charged.

Over the years a number of Kurna people (Dennis O’Brien, Trent Wanganeen, Emillie O’Brien, Katrina Power and Taylor Power-Smith) have been employed on a part-time basis to assist with the business of KWP, funded by Commonwealth Government grants, royalties or by monies earned from fee for service or sale of Kurna materials. In particular the work of Kurna language workers includes the recording of sound files, sending out KWP information sheets and questionnaires to those making requests, maintaining the

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<sup>6</sup> Jack Kanya Buckskin has shown some interest in studying linguistics at university at some point in the future and has asked about what is involved in getting to the point where he is able to take over my job. For now he is more than fully occupied with teaching, working, performing and family. Most other members of the Kurna language movement are otherwise occupied in their own professions (public service, counselling, academia) or are retired.

KWP webpages and entering data into the Kurna Requests database. The hope is that one day these young Kurna people will take over the business affairs of KWP.

**9. FUNDED PROJECTS.** As discussed earlier, Kurna language reclamation began with Federal Government funding sought by Ngarrpadla Alitya Rigney and others within the education sector. Technical and Further Education (TAFE) funded a short-lived Kurna course provided specifically for members of the Kurna community in 1996 (Amery 2000a: 236). In the late 1990s I was contracted by KACHA to run a series of workshops within the Reviving the Dreaming project (Amery 2000b).

Since the establishment of KWP in 2002, almost all Kurna language work, apart from the teaching of Kurna programs in schools and some curriculum writing, has been conducted by KWP. At first KWP was located at the University of South Australia (UniSA) by virtue of my academic position and Lewis O'Brien's adjunct status there. Through UniSA, I sought and obtained funding from the Adelaide City Council on behalf of KWP for an investigation of the use of Kurna language in the public domain within the city and its presentation on the Adelaide City Council webpages.

In 2005, KWP was approached by Paul Tulloch from the City of Onkaparinga for input into a Kurna Placenames project for which they had obtained funding through the National Estates program. In 2006 KWP entered into a partnership with the Geographical Names Unit, the Tappa Iri Business Centre and four southern local governments to work on this project ([www.kaurnaplacenames.com](http://www.kaurnaplacenames.com)). In 2011, the state Department of Education and Child Services (now the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD)) offered funding to KWP to oversee the development of Kurna Curriculum and other resources to support the teaching of Kurna in accordance with KWP-determined priorities. This partnership between DECD and KWP has been renewed annually since then, together with the provision of further funding for work on Kurna language resources and professional development.

Since 2004, I have sought funding from the Commonwealth on behalf of KWP through the University of Adelaide. Amery & Rigney (2007: 24-25) provide a brief description of KWP projects up until 2007 (Mentoring Project, Kurna Requests, Kurna Learners Guide). Since then, KWP has successfully accessed funds to produce two hour-long radio shows in and about the Kurna language and to produce a Kurna Dictionary. Both these projects are nearing completion.

In 2012, KWP was successful in its triennial grant application to establish a KWP Secretariat and an annual grant application to produce more radio shows and YouTube video clips. These two applications were combined by the funding body and relabelled Consolidating Kurna Language Revival (CKLR). Through this grant four part-time (0.4) workers have been employed as follows:

- Kurna Language Coordinator: Jack Kanya Buckskin
- Kurna Media Production Officer: Steve Gadlabarti Goldsmith
- Kurna Media Production Mentor: Paul Finlay
- KWP Administration Coordinator: Gerhard Rüdiger

Kurna projects have always been undertaken through teamwork and close consultation with KWP, especially with the Kurna Elders providing advice and direction. Scripts for radio shows or learning materials are workshopped together and Kurna people are engaged to record the sound files. On-the-job training is also provided in an effort to build capacity. Currently we have a series of mentoring relationships through the CKLR project, funding through the Department of Education and Child Development, royalties and other earnings as follows:

- Jack Kanya Buckskin mentored by Mary-Anne Gale through the TAFE Certificate IV ‘Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language (Kurna)’
- Buckskin working with Gale, an InDesign layout software specialist Corinna Kuoni and myself in producing and updating Kurna language resources
- Jasmin Morley working with Buckskin, Power-Smith and myself in development of a Kurna Dictionary. Morley has established the Toolbox database and refined the glosses; Buckskin has been recording the sound files; Morley has been teaching Power-Smith how to edit and label the sound files; Buckskin and I have been editing the dictionary and advising on phonemic and semantic representation of Kurna words.
- Goldsmith is being mentored by Finlay who has extensive experience in the media industry. Goldsmith performs in front of and behind the camera. Buckskin and Power-Smith are also frequent presenters in the film clips and are mentored by Finlay in developing presentation skills. Other Kurna people are co-opted from time to time in the making of film clips (<http://bit.ly/kurna>).
- Power-Smith works together with Rüdiger and myself in KWP administration. I am mentoring her in the setting of meeting agendas, the taking of minutes, whilst Rüdiger is teaching her web page maintenance skills.
- Schultz is still looking for a Kurna placenames researcher whom he can mentor to take over his work. The need for a Kurna person to take over responsibility for this area has been raised at a number of KWP meetings. In the meantime, Schultz works together with Rüdiger (for assistance in technical matters) and myself (for advice on linguistic matters), all at the direction of the KWP committee.

Despite all the mentoring activity in place, there is still a long way to go in building a self-sustaining language project.

#### **10. A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING / MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT.**

When my contract at the University of Adelaide was not renewed in 2001, I took up a position at UniSA taking the Kurna course with me. Lewis O’Brien, Alitya Rigney and I successfully negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UniSA signed on 14th May 2003 such that ownership of the Kurna course materials was vested in the Kurna community as represented by O’Brien and Rigney. This was a clear cut case, as UniSA had not invested a cent in the development of the course or the teaching of the course at that point in time. Though the MoU is in place, UniSA has not been good at adhering to the terms of the agreement and upon my departure from UniSA in 2004 it

re-assigned my Intellectual Property rights in the agreement to O'Brien and Rigney without consulting me, O'Brien or Rigney. All three of us wrote to UniSA on 1 August 2006 reiterating that the agreement of 14th May 2003 was still current. The agreement included the clause:

Courses offered by the University based on the Course Materials licensed to the university under Item (2) may only be delivered by Dr Amery unless consent in writing is obtained from the Kaurna community through Mr O'Brien and Dr Rigney or their nominees.

The University of South Australia advertised the Kaurna Language & Culture course for 2012, again without consulting O'Brien, Rigney or myself.

On my return to the University of Adelaide in 2004, together with Rigney and O'Brien, I sought to negotiate a similar agreement there. Later in 2004 a draft MoU had been drawn up by University lawyers. This was revised to a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) in 2006. However, the signing was stalled following advice from Roger Thomas then Director of Wilto Yerlo (the Aboriginal program at the University of Adelaide) that a grievance committee needed to be established first. Alitya Rigney, Lewis O'Brien and Lester Irabinna Rigney sent a letter to the Vice Chancellor on 24 April 2009 to progress the matter.

Early in 2013, branding became an issue when we wished to print double-sided business cards and produce brochures and YouTube clips through the CKLR project. I myself have had double-sided business cards for many years and we had established KWP webpages in 2005 through the University with its own KWP branding (see [www.adelaide.edu.au/kwp](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/kwp)). However, we learnt that two or three years ago, the University had adopted a strict policy of uniform branding which did not permit units within the University to use their own logos, without express permission from the Vice Chancellor. This, together with the issue of donations coming in to KWP, stimulated discussion about the status of KWP at the highest levels within the University. An eight-page application was lodged on 30 May 2013 by the Director of the University's Engagement Business Services on behalf of KWP for permission to maintain a logo and sub-brand. These difficulties and obstructions actually served as the catalyst to achieve a breakthrough to effect the MoU after nine years of indecision. Following two face-to-face meetings with the Vice Chancellor in June and August, the MoU was finally signed on the 2nd September 2013 by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Warren Bebbington, and Kaurna Elders Dr Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien and Dr Alitya Wallara Rigney. The MoU is written in fairly general terms, but significantly it does acknowledge KWP's "custodianship over Kaurna language matters" and commits the University "to teach and research the Kaurna language".

The Myaamia Tribe of Oklahoma, referred to earlier, have a MoU signed with Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and this was used as precedence in our discussions with the University of Adelaide. The Myaamia MoU also came in the wake of a long-standing relationship with the University.

The agreement with the University of Adelaide is important to KWP as it has tried unsuccessfully to register a certified KWP trademark. Not being an incorporated body, KWP is unable to hold a registered trademark and has requested the University to hold it

on behalf of KWP within the terms of a MoA. Having the Kurna language movement within the university brings a measure of integrity, prestige and status. Refereed academic publications ensure quality research and credibility. On the other hand, the MoU allows KWP to operate as its own entity within the University environment, which affords it with a measure of credibility within the Aboriginal community.

KWP is a gift for the University of Adelaide, bringing with it a long-standing partnership with the Kurna community and talented Kurna employees who are able to contribute to the life of the University in numerous ways. Steve Gadlabarti Goldsmith gave an engaging orientation to newly arrived exchange students from Europe and North America in February 2013. KWP members and employees made valuable contributions to the Reclaiming Languages summer school course in January 2013. KWP brings substance to the University's Reconciliation Statement and to the Vice Chancellor's Beacon of Enlightenment statement which holds that "[the University is] a place where the Kurna people, original custodians of the land on which the campuses now rest, are acknowledged and their culture respected".

**11. TOWARDS THE INCORPORATION OF KWP.** Incorporation of KWP has been discussed many times. The main difficulty has been identifying who would take on the responsibility for the business affairs of the organisation. The two signatories of KWP are senior retired Kurna Elders and are not in a position to take on the administrative load of KWP. All KWP members lead busy lives. The administrative tasks are left to me as project manager of various Kurna language projects with assistance from Power-Smith, KWP's part-time administrative assistant. As I already have a full-time job as lecturer and Head of the Discipline of Linguistics at the University of Adelaide, the additional tasks of managing the legal and financial affairs of an independent incorporated KWP is beyond my capacity. Even within the context of the University the task of running KWP is becoming increasingly complex.

In April 2008 a special meeting 'KWP Secretariat Forum' was organised by Lester Irabinna Rigney, then at Flinders University, upon his return from study leave at the University of British Columbia. Irabinna had observed successful language revitalisation programs there and was keen to review the operation of KWP in the light of what he had learnt in Canada. The meeting was described in the minutes as "a mini 20/20 summit on where we see Kurna is going. To discuss where we want to be in the future". Whilst I usually maintain the minutes of KWP meetings, this time I took a back seat. The taking of these minutes was coordinated by Lester Irabinna Rigney. According to the forum minutes, "the format of KWP [was] very well liked. It's just a pity we don't have more members". Whilst the vulnerability of KWP was noted: "It is premised on personality – if Rob [Amery] is not there, then what happens?" and whilst there was talk of fund-raising and employing a KWP project officer little progress was made on this front for some years.

To this end, I lodged a triennial grant application in February 2012 to the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program for a funded secretariat, establishment of a board of management and incorporation at the end of the project in 2015. Fortunately this project, now known as Consolidating Kurna Language Revival (CKLR) discussed above, was funded. This is our window of opportunity when we have increased capacity to manage

KWP affairs. Accordingly the groundwork was undertaken quickly to set up an incorporated body under the Office of Registration of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). The inaugural meeting to establish the new body known as Kurna Warra Karrpanthi (KWK) ‘supporting Kurna language’ was held on 5th September 2013. It was attended by six Kurna and five non-Kurna people, with another nine apologies (eight of them from Kurna people). Five Kurna Directors were nominated and appointed unopposed at this meeting. Katrina Karlapina Power was elected as chairperson, but I was named as KWK contact person and Gerhard Rüdiger does most of the administration at this point in time, though, as non-Indigenous persons, we are only associate members. KWK was duly registered as an Indigenous corporation on 24th October 2013. Tax-deductibility status will now be sought. KWK will work alongside KWP to support the Kurna language work within the University. The extent to which KWK becomes directly involved or takes over this work will be up to Kurna people themselves, but KWK provides a mechanism for this without jeopardising the ongoing work of KWP. See Amery & Buckskin (2013) for more details.

**12. CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS.** Joint conference presentations between linguists and their Aboriginal co-workers are now relatively common. However, unless there is a dedicated Aboriginal program it is rare to see Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people attend Australian Linguistics Society (ALS) conferences. Whilst joint publication is to be encouraged, as it was for this collection, as it obviously allows both voices to be heard in a single publication and may help launch the career of a junior partner, it is now being disfavoured in academia. Academics are being encouraged to maximise the value of their publications and thus income flowing to the university. Joint publication dilutes the value accruing to the academic from publication. Furthermore, with constantly increasing academic workloads and pressure to publish, joint publications usually take much longer to write and significant time needs to be set aside for consultation and discussion. This time pressure has mitigated against the present paper, despite the subject matter, being co-written with Kurna colleagues.

I have presented at many conferences locally in Adelaide, at national conferences and internationally. Often I have presented alone, but have often presented jointly with Kurna people – fellow academic Lester Irabinna Rigney, Kurna Elders Ngarrpadla Alitya Wallara Rigney and Georgina Williams, teachers of Kurna Cherie Warrara Watkins and Jack Kanya Buckskin, and KWP co-workers Dennis O’Brien and Emilie O’Brien, and also Karl Winda Telfer and Katrina Karlapina Power. Following a joint presentation with Buckskin at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Conference in 2009, we were invited to present workshops at the InField Institute on Field Linguistics and Language Documentation held in Eugene, Oregon in June 2010. Such conference presentations have sometimes resulted in publications (Amery & Williams 2002; Amery & L. I. Rigney 2006; Amery & O’Brien 2007; Amery & A. Rigney 2007; Amery, Buckskin & Watt, forthcoming; Amery & Buckskin 2012a; Amery & Buckskin 2012b; Amery & Buckskin 2013).

Jack Kanya Buckskin attended the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL) conference in Kuala Lumpur in 2007 and Ottawa in October 2013 with KWP support. Sometimes funding is forthcoming from other sources (eg AIATSIS) to support conference at-



tendance by Kurna people. In July 2005 Dennis O'Brien travelled to Harvard to present at the Linguistics Society of America conference with support from the Society of Friends and KWP. In 2011 funds were obtained from the Yitpi Foundation to support travel to Germany by Alitya Rigney, Karl Telfer and Ngarrindjeri woman Verna Koolmatrie on the occasion of the 175th anniversary of the formation of the Dresden Mission Society.

Kurna language resources are typically the result of collaboration and the contribution of Kurna people is acknowledged in various ways. It is often difficult to know how best to do this. How should the respective contributions be acknowledged? Authorship of the Kurna funeral protocols book was accorded to Amery & Rigney with Varcoe, Schultz and KWP (2006). The original conception of the funeral underpinning the booklet was conceived by Rigney and developed by myself. However, Varcoe and Schultz also played a major role in developing liturgy and musical scores. The Kurna Learner's Guide was vested in Amery & Simpson with KWP (2007, 2013) though the Kurna contributors are clearly acknowledged and they have copyright over their own interviews included in the book.

Publications written for the use of Aboriginal communities typically do not gain recognition from the Commonwealth Government Department of Education Science and Training (DEST), though they may entail a significant level of detailed research. Waria-Read et al (2009), for instance, was based on detailed comparative work I carried out with assistance from Guy Tunstill, yet it is not recognised by the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) accounting mechanism (Australian Research Council 2012). The same applies to the Kurna Funeral Protocols book (Amery & Rigney 2006). Academic linguists working with Aboriginal communities are torn between the needs of the academy and the needs of the community. And whilst community service is expected of academics, it does not accrue points within the University of Adelaide School of Humanities workload model. Nor do the writing or compilation of non-DEST recognised publications. So, much of my workload as an academic in running the affairs of KWP, dealing with the hundreds of requests received and producing material for use by the community goes unrewarded in the workload model.

**13. CONCLUSION.** Aboriginal language programs are usually located in community-based language centres or within Aboriginal community organisations. Many language centres in Australia (eg the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL), Wangka Maya in the Pilbara region, and Miriwoong Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre in the Kimberley region) employ their own linguists. Universities, on the other hand, provide linguists who conduct research in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and individuals, or they may be hired as consultants to carry out a specific task such as a language survey, produce a dictionary etc. Universities also provide linguistics courses that teach about the languages of Australia, Indigenous language issues, language revival etc and in a few cases, offer courses in specific Aboriginal languages (such as Pitjantjatjara at the University of South Australia, Djambarrpuynu at Charles Darwin University). In rare cases, universities offer training to Aboriginal people in skills and techniques for language work (such as the Master of In-

digenous Languages Education at the Koori Centre, University of Sydney). The University of Adelaide is unusual in that it hosts the Mobile Language Team<sup>7</sup> established in 2009 with a state-wide brief to support the languages of South Australia though there are moves afoot to move this out of the university environment and into a language centre in the coming years.

The University of Adelaide is also unusual, perhaps unique, in hosting KWP, a quasi-community-based language revival movement. KWP arose out of a particular set of circumstances, described earlier, which has resulted in its location within the tertiary sector. But in the absence of any systemic support from the University, KWP is ultimately unsustainable, being dependent on an individual within the system. The Kurna language movement is still trying to find the way forward and to cope with the massive demands placed upon it.

There is a deep level of commitment to KWP by both linguists and other researchers and a small group of Kurna activists now spanning several generations. The partnership is slowly expanding with more non-Aboriginal researchers becoming involved. With the triennial funding 2012-2015, two key Kurna people, Jack Kanya Buckskin and Steve Gadlabarti Goldsmith, are now employees of the University of Adelaide on three-year part-time contracts. This changes the situation considerably. What happens after 2015 is unknown. We are unlikely to be able to secure the same level of funding that we have now over the long term. We are yet to work out how to make the movement sustainable in the long-term, but we are working on it.

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.mobilelanguageteam.com.au](http://www.mobilelanguageteam.com.au).

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