

## COMMUNIQUE

### Dubbo – Yarradamarra Centre, Dubbo TAFE

11 May 2017

The workshop commenced with a Welcome to Country and a minute silence.

The legislation should be drafted in Plain English and be clearly understood by Aboriginal people. The challenge for the legislation will be balancing the aim of being easily understood while remaining legally enforceable. It was also noted that legislation can still be changed and is subject to differing interpretations. The legislation should protect intellectual and cultural property rights to language vested in Aboriginal peoples. Current provisions of the draft Bill required clearer expression.

Further challenges for the legislation will be recognising the linguistic diversity of NSW, including regional differences (dialects). The Bill should recognise that language belongs to the land, and that Aboriginal peoples own and have authority to control their languages.

The Bill should recognise the past government attempts to suppress languages (in clause 3 or a preamble). It was also noted that Aboriginal languages are not lost, only sleeping and awaiting reawakening. Languages have also moved around the State from their homelands. Teaching languages is a challenge in communities like Dubbo, for example, does this mean the local language (Wiradjuri) or a family's own language. Local control of Aboriginal language education can avoid these unintended consequences.

Legislation must recognise the connection between Aboriginal languages and culture, and recognise that Aboriginal language boundaries do not align with state and territory borders.

Resources will be required for the Bill to be effective. More resources for Aboriginal language teaching in schools and TAFE. There also needs to be greater and significant recognition for the time and knowledge Elders are contributing, and a simplified qualification process to allow Elders to teach language at schools. Resources must be sustainable (for example a fixed allocation) and should not lead to competition within communities.

The local vision was that all school students in the area are learning an Aboriginal language (preferably the language of the land, Wiradjuri), and being taught by Aboriginal teachers. It was recognised that achieving the local vision would be a long term (10-15 year) objective.

The Centre for Aboriginal Languages should be regional with a centre for each Aboriginal language group. Its "specialists" should not be "handpicked" by government but be accepted by the community. The Centre should also have the function of promote ethical practice, according to local protocols, in language revival; as well as make language materials accessible (including repatriation of materials held by cultural institutions), support local employment (such as tourism), and build pride and respect for Aboriginal languages.