

COMMUNIQUE

Lightning Ridge – Walanbaa Dhurrali

2 May 2017

The workshop commenced with a Welcome to Country by Aunty Brenda McBride. Cultural performances were given by Lightning Ridge Central School, Lightning Ridge Pre-school and a local artist performed original songs in language.

Participants said that the languages Bill should acknowledge the work of previous generations. The Bill should be inclusive of all language groups, describe the uniqueness of NSW languages and the interconnectedness of language and land.

There was support for an Aboriginal languages advisory group with representatives of each language group. The terms “First Nations” and “First Language” were preferred instead of the word “Aboriginal”. The Bill should recognise that Aboriginal languages belong to the land, and language sovereignty, which means that the language group are responsible for maintaining its integrity and respect.

It is important that languages are spoken at home and taught in the community. Schools and government agencies should include language use in everyday activities. However, care must be taken to avoid institutionalising languages and to afford respect for cultural governance. Community governance should direct language education, and inform the community of language activities. The Strategic Plan should include another element on communication, and align with community aspirations.

Government role is to resource language revival and teaching. The Bill should include funding provisions to guarantee resources. There was support for expanding the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests program, but under a community-owned and led model.

There was support for training Aboriginal teacher’s aides in languages and incorporating Aboriginal perspectives across the school curriculum. The advisory committee could monitor and evaluate language education.

The notion of an Aboriginal Languages Centre could be a Centre for First Languages of NSW and must be independent of government, protected from changes of government, and governed by its own Board.

There should be follow-up meetings to inform communities of the final Bill.