

COMMUNIQUE

Moruya – St Mary's Performing Arts Centre

5 May 2017

The workshop commenced with a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country.

St Marys Catholic School students spoke about their Dhurga languages classes.

Participants said that language was never lost. It was passed down through the generations, and is a continuing part of culture. Languages endured in spite of everything, they were just 'sleeping'. Language is linked to healing and community harmony.

The word "Aboriginal" does not illustrate the richness, diversity and sense of belonging and identity amongst Aboriginal people. For instance 'Koori' is used locally but not across NSW.

The recognition statements must include ownership of languages (or sovereign right to language) and the history and resilience of Aboriginal languages. This could be contained in a preamble.

Aboriginal communities have differing views on teaching language, highlighting the importance of local decision making according to protocols and cultural responsibilities.

The legislation has to provide for local language decision making, and for a state-wide Aboriginal language body. The body must have authority and provide advocacy, dispute resolution, and decision-making. It must be capable of dealing with community politics and factionalism.

The language of the Bill must be easily understood to avoid interpretation problems. There also needs to be surety that funding is ongoing and for equitable allocation of resources.

The Centre for Aboriginal Languages of NSW must be independent of Aboriginal Affairs and have connections with local Aboriginal communities. Preference is for regional Aboriginal Language Centres, which will provide for regional employment and governance. Legislation must be flexible to allow the Centre to grow and develop, based on the principles of integrity and sustainability.

Aboriginal Affairs to discuss the final Bill, Strategic Plan and details of the Centre with the community further before they are finalised.