

COMMUNIQUE

Tamworth – Tamworth TAFE

23 May 2017

The workshop began with a Welcome to Country by Uncle Len Sampson. This was complemented with a speech from Len Waters on a performance by the Westdale Gems, a group comprising Aboriginal girls from Westdale Public School who sang a few songs in Gamilaraay.

There was support for 'First People of NSW' to replace the word 'Aboriginal'. It was noted that there are other Aboriginal cultures across the world and we need to distinguish Australian Aboriginals from other cultures in the Bill.

It was noted that there were not enough Aboriginal language sites in the New England area – and places such as Moree and Toomelah need to be included.

The Acknowledgment Statement needs to note that language belongs to the land and that Aboriginal people are the custodians of the land and its language. It should also acknowledge the damage that the Government did to Aboriginal languages and there should be a formal apology.

The group discussed that Aboriginal people should be able to learn as many Aboriginal languages as they like, as traditionally Aboriginal people were multilingual and would have known the neighbouring languages. They also discussed that to keep languages alive they must be in use, and this includes opening languages up to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who want to learn.

The Legislation needs to state that Aboriginal people maintain ownership of their languages and the intellectual property that comes with that. The Government should not have any ownership in the legislation.

The non-verbal language Aboriginal people use should also be acknowledged.

Funding for the legislation should include reparations to make up for the damage the Government did to Aboriginal languages.