

## COMMUNIQUE

### Taree – Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE)

8 June 2017

The Workshop commenced with a Welcome to Country and cultural performance by the Waang Djarii dancers.

Ownership of languages is with Aboriginal people, and intellectual property rights should be protected. Government ownership and Ministerial control were rejected. The terms 'First Nations' and 'First Peoples' were supported, but still regarded as outsider terms. The Bill should also include the Federal Government and sharing of languages with the broader community. The Bill must be carefully written for clarity and meaning; it should be moulded by community, not mould community to it. The term 'revival' excludes languages, such as those at reclamation stage, and role of protecting languages rests with communities. The Bill should be underpinned by a Charter of Aboriginal Languages, outlining rights and protocols.

Language should be taught to Aboriginal children and parents (and grandparents) before non-Aboriginal people to avoid shame and non-Aboriginal people unfairly benefiting from Aboriginal culture. Languages should be like an airborne virus, once about 70% of an Aboriginal community can use language, they become comfortable with teaching and sharing language with the broader community.

Language is a movement, trying to infect people with enthusiasm. However this requires a team of people, struggling against resource limitations, competition for resources, competing priorities within families and communities. Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were seen as taking away resources from community organisations and not teaching parents. Community control of who can teach language is important, for example a seal on a TAFE Certificate as evidence of community endorsement. Teaching and qualifications for Elders must be flexible, accessible and appropriate (such as mode of delivery and assessment).

Teaching language is healing. At Taree High School, Gattang is taught to all Year 7 students through signs and basic words, creating pride for Aboriginal students and better appreciation of culture for non-Aboriginal students.

Government's role is to provide sustained long term funding for programs, as directed by community. Ministerial accountability to community for delivery of a languages plan is critical. Funding should be new money.

A Language Centre must be accessible, such as a unit (cultural centre) for each language. Functions, governance, and staff of the Centre should go to Aboriginal people. Community should identify specialists and priorities. Land councils could have a role, but have to respect diversity. Without Aboriginal control, the centre will just be another imposed Aboriginal body under legislation.