

COMMUNIQUE

Wilcannia – Wilcannia Community Hall

8 May 2017

The workshop commenced with a Welcome to Country by Owen Whyman.

An overview of language activities and the local community revival efforts was given by four prominent community members, each of whom are both speakers and teachers of the local language/s. All shared their personal stories and reflected passion and commitment to ensuring Wilcannia maintained and strengthened the Barkinji language.

Participants said the legislation should recognise the importance of community taking control of the revival and preservation of their language.

There was support for 'First Languages of NSW' and 'First Nations Languages of NSW' to replace the word 'Aboriginal'. The Bill must include resources and support local decision making on languages and ensure digital technology is used as an aid and not a replacement for teaching language. Participants were adamant that technology is *not the means to an end. Being on country and physically being taught in person is most important.*

There was support for the statement that language belongs to the land, and language teaching should occur on the land. The Bill should acknowledge the cultural authority of First Nations people as custodians and owners of languages and recognise people's inherent right to access and obtain information on their own language.

Governments should do all in their power to support language revival, through legislation and resourcing the strategic plan. Those resources must be ongoing, sustainable and protected from changes in government.

Participants saw education as a critical pathway to support all types of language revival activities that should include access to professional services and career paths both within the school and community. In addition to this participants spoke passionately about how astronomy, botany, geography and mathematics should include an Aboriginal world view system.

The Strategic Plan should include the preservation of language materials both on country and in cultural institutions. Participants acknowledged the importance of working with the broader language community to allow for the transfer of knowledge and skills to community to enable them manage and maintain resources on country.

The local vision was to make local language and culture part of school-based learning, so that the next generation could talk their language. There was a strong call for a community-owned and led language centre at the local level in Wilcannia – a place where language activities could happen.