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California Down Under: Indigenous Language Revitalization in New South Wales, Australia

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1.   Introduction

The state of New South Wales [henceforth NSW] in Australia shares a number of similarities with language revitalization in California as well as some significant differences. In this paper, we provide a brief overview of the Indigenous language situation in NSW. Then we focus on language revitalization in NSW particularly over the last five years, with a special emphasis on education. We turn then to the comparison between NSW and California. Although California's efforts have been more sustained and focused over a longer period, NSW has made rapid gains in a short period and has received considerable government support. We conclude with some remarks on future directions in NSW.

2.   NSW and its Indigenous Language Situation

NSW was the first part of Australia to be settled by outsiders. From 1788 a process of Indigenous language shift began so that many of the 70 languages originally spoken in this state at first contact are no longer in daily use. As in many other parts of the world the region first settled was the hardest hit in terms of indifference, disregard and hostility towards its languages. All too often Aboriginal people were actively discouraged from using and passing on their languages through educational, and wider government, policy.

In a volume dealing with endangered languages around the world a major academic authority on Australian Aboriginal languages makes the following "authoritative statement":

> There are today many people of part-Aboriginal descent in highly settled parts of Austra-lia (New South Wales, Victoria and the southern parts of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia) but virtually no full bloods. Only one language is still spoken in this area (Bandjalang, in northern New South Wales), and that only by a handful of old people; over 100 languages have already become extinct (Dixon 1991:235).

This is a curious statement in that it suggests a correlation between language viability and degree of intermarriage. In fact in parts of northern Australia there are many so-called 'full-bloods' who do not have an active command of an

Australian language. This has led to a divide, at least in the minds of some, between some regions of Australia which are said to have retained their languages and traditions and other regions which have not. Not surprisingly, the situation is more complex than that.

Although the state of NSW has sometimes been viewed as less 'traditional' than other parts of the country, particularly northern Australia, which experienced contact with outsiders much later and in a less sustained way. However, many Aboriginal people in the south, including NSW, see knowledge and use of an ancestral language as a key feature for what it means to be traditional. Because they see their knowledge and use as less than their northern counterparts they also see themselves as somehow less traditional. And this view receives plenty of reinforcement from the wider Australian community. In fact many NSW people are not only intensely interested in the Indigenous languages of their region but also identify themselves and each other through language. This is not just a matter of adopting the language label but often involves a number of words from that language and a few stock phrases – intermingled in their English. The process is not random or haphazard: these people will usually only use material from their own language and are likely to draw attention to material from someone else's language. Why? Because Aboriginal languages can be seen as a form of property which one inherits from a parent and then *owns* (Walsh 2002).

But such knowledge and use as NSW people have is often measured against the yardstick of the 'full' fluency to be found in the north. During a major survey of NSW languages (Hosking *et al*. 2000), Aboriginal people would often be dismissive of their knowledge and use. We have often observed an Aboriginal person who had just claimed that the language was no longer spoken address another Aboriginal person in that very language. Otherwise their English was distinctive by its use of words from local Aboriginal languages. In short, we believe that NSW people have been underreporting their knowledge and use of ancestral languages. In any case, this survey amply demonstrated that there was a very strong interest in reclaiming languages.

To underline this discrepancy if we focus on a number of NSW languages, in particular: Baagandji in the northwest; Gamilaraay in north central NSW and Gumbaynggirr on the north coast, the situation appears bleak:

      Estimates for numbers of speakers (from Walsh 1981)

Baagandji	3??
Gamilaraay	4??
Gumbaynggirr	1??

More generally, the 2001 Census claimed that just 788 (out of a total of nearly 200,000 Indigenous people in NSW) speak an Indigenous language. Other surveys support this apparent low level of use and knowledge (Nash 1998, McConvell and Thieberger 2001).

There are many reasons for such low figures. Aboriginal people were often

actively discouraged from using and passing on their languages through educa-
tional, and wider government, policy. Adapting to the new circumstances brought
on by 'settlement', Aboriginal people moved away from their traditional
territories to maintain traditional hunting and gathering activities. Sometimes,
Aboriginal people moved away for employment purposes; often, Aboriginal
people were removed from their parents and sent to distant locations. In these
ways speech communities were broken up and dispersed.

However, more recent investigations indicate that Aboriginal people were
underreporting the state of language use and knowledge in their communities and
that an initial air of pessimism could be offset once people felt that their lan-
guages could be reclaimed. In the case of the 3 languages mentioned above each
has made great strides within the last 10 to 15 years (for further detail on
Gumbaynggirr, see Walsh 2001).

2.1.   Some Highs and Lows in the Study of NSW Languages

In 1788 the First Fleet arrived in Sydney. On board were soldiers, settlers and
convicts from the British Isles as one purpose for the new settlement was to be a
penal colony. The first colonial governor of NSW, Captain Arthur Philip, had
instructions to foster communication with the local inhabitants:

> *You are to endeavour, by every possible means, to open an intercourse with the natives,*
> *and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness*
> *with them* (George III 1787).

Ironically his instructions came from the King who had not long before lost the
War of Independence in what had become the United States of America. As we
will see this king's instructions were not always carried out as he might have
hoped. By December of 1788 Philip had captured and manacled a Dharuk man,
Arabanoo, so as to learn his language and for him to learn English. By May 1789
Arabanoo had died of smallpox. This representative of the Indigenous language of
the Sydney region was thus one of the early casualties of diseases introduced by
outsiders. Not to be deterred, by November 1789 Philip had detained two other
Dharuk men, Benelong and Colbee, presumably once more '*to open an inter-
course with the natives*'. Colbee escaped almost immediately as did Benelong but
he was re-captured and later escaped in May 1790. In December 1790 Philip
launched a punitive expedition on the local population and this led to an alterca-
tion with one of his naval officers, Lieutenant William Dawes. Dawes made the
first extended study of an Australian Indigenous language and was quite sympa-
thetic to the plight of the original inhabitants. This empathy led to Dawes being
sent home taking his notebooks of Dharuk grammar and vocabulary with him in
December 1791. These important materials remained unknown to scholars and the
descendants of people like Arabanoo, Benelong and Colbee until the notebooks
were rediscovered in a London library in 1972.

A little to the north of Sydney an Anglican missionary, Lancelot Edward

Threlkeld, arrived in the Newcastle area in 1825 and began to study Awabakal, the local Indigenous language. Threlkeld was a dedicated researcher who made considerable progress with the language but in 1841 he had decided to abandon his mission:

> … *solely from the Aborigines becoming extinct in these districts, and the very few that remain elsewhere are so scattered, that it is impossible to congregate them for instruction, and when seen in towns, they are generally unfit to engage in profitable conversation. The thousands of Aborigines, if ever they did exist in these parts, decreased to hundreds; the hundreds have lessened to tens, and the tens will dwindle into units, before a very few years shall have passed away* (from Threlkeld's Final Report to the Mission to the Aborigines, New South Wales, 1841).

For the rest of NSW there was not much recorded for most languages for the rest of the 19th century. In the late 19th century there was some material collected during what has sometimes been referred to as the 'golden age of the questionnaire'. An individual or organization would send out a questionnaire to numerous locations to gather various kinds of information about the local peoples and sometimes the inquiries were specifically language oriented. Although the quality of the information gathered in these surveys is variable, it is sometimes one of the most substantial sources of information available. For most of the 20th century up to the 1960s very little was recorded. From the 1970s onwards there was an explosive growth in the recording of Indigenous languages across Australia as a whole but still precious little in NSW, and even then it was often enough a case of 'too little, too late'. In this period for one NSW language, Gumbaynggirr, Diana Eades reported in 1979 that there was just one person with a fluent command of the language: Mr. Harry 'Tiger' Buchanan. Mr. Buchanan was about 80 at the time and has since died. Before his death Tiger Buchanan would use the language for prayer and to talk to his dog (Walsh 2001).

This overview of research on NSW languages has tried to give a feel for how little had been documented and therefore how much of a challenge language revitalization has faced in NSW in recent times.

3.   Recent Developments

Recent developments in NSW Aboriginal languages can be summarized as follows:

- 1999-2000: NSW language survey: *Strong Language, Strong Culture* (Hosking *et al*. 2000). Asked the following two main questions:
  - ➢ What is the current situation with regard to Aboriginal languages in NSW?
  - ➢ What do Aboriginal people want to see happen in the future?
- 2000 onwards: Aboriginal Curriculum Unit at the Office of the NSW Board of Studies – introduction of an Aboriginal Languages Syllabus into NSW schools
- 2002 onwards: NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs has been developing a

NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy[1]
- March 2003: *NSW Aboriginal Language Research and Resource Centre* established
- June 2003: *Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus* published by the NSW Board of Studies
- September 2003-August 2004: NSW *Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus* Support Documents
- November 2003-June 2004: setting up the NSW Aboriginal Languages Database
- October 2003-December 2004: trial of the *Syllabus* in a number of NSW schools
- January 2005: the *Syllabus* begins official operation in a number of NSW schools

4. The Place of Education in Language Reclamation
4.1. Education and Language Access to 2003
The funding of school-based programs in NSW (along with other states) has to date, been highly problematic. In part this is due to an apparent lack of priority from both the states and commonwealth in providing an ongoing source of funding and support required to develop effective language programs. Presently, most funding for Aboriginal education programs comes to the states by way of *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program* (IESIP) grants. These grants, as the title suggests, were meant to be strategic in focus and non-recurrent, but have instead become the main funding source used to employ Aboriginal education workers and to support mainstream educational programs. School systems have prioritized the valuing of literacy and numeracy programs above a commitment to support the aspirations of Aboriginal people in reclaiming learning their languages. The harbouring of these resources for mainstream educational programs has severely impacted on schools attracting the necessary financial support needed to commit to the long-term implementation of language programs.

While IESIP funds are provided to the states specifically to support Indigenous education programs, similarly the commonwealth has funded *Languages Other than English* (LOTE) program to support the teaching of languages in schools. Funds of A$120 million over the quadrennium 2001-2004 were used to support the teaching of languages other than English across Australia. Though there was a capacity for states to use these resources to support Aboriginal language programs, most chose instead to use their already overextended IESIP funds.

This decision, in the case of NSW has impacted unfavorably on the health of school-based Aboriginal language programs. In the year ending 2003, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) spent less than $150,000 in imple-

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[1] See http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/data/files//LanguagesPolicyDocIn.pdf

menting language programs across the state. These funds were split across 23 schools and were primarily used to fund local language tutors in each of the schools. Schools were expected to absorb the often-substantial additional costs from their very small discretionary budgets. The administration of this program has been criticized by schools and Aboriginal community members as being too small and untimely in the delivery of funds. Schools have also been critical of program evaluation processes that have ignored the need to engage in an appropriate assessment of progress made in student achievement of language outcomes. In addition to this lack of program clarity, there has been an unwillingness in NSW to provide a language consultant to assist schools develop quality language programs. This level of support has been demonstrated in other programs to provide schools with practical support in developing curriculum, supporting effective pedagogic practices and facilitating school and community partnerships. This type of support has been demonstrated to be highly effective in both Western Australia and South Australia, where specific Aboriginal language consultants facilitate school/community links, language teaching and curriculum development training as well as being overall advocates within the system.

The lack of a strategic plan to support both community and school delivered Indigenous languages programs has exposed a deep policy disjuncture between the states and commonwealth, as well as between different commonwealth agencies themselves, who variously fund school-based language programs, Indigenous education program initiatives and community language programs. The lack of a clear plan or an advocate within government has led to a piecemeal approach to supporting language programs across Australia.

It was within this broader policy environment that the Board of Studies NSW (BOS) developed its *Interim Aboriginal Languages K-10 Framework* (BOS 1998) [*Interim Framework*]. The *Interim Framework* was the Board's attempt to support schools that had expressed an interest in developing school-based Aboriginal language programs. Initial work emanated from the Board's response to the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1991) that had identified the aspirations of Indigenous peoples to reconnect with their traditional language, culture and identity. The *Interim Framework* provided both schools and communities with guidance on scoping a coherent language program and identified broad learning objectives and outcomes. More generally, the *Interim Framework* positioned Indigenous languages in NSW as having a legitimate place previously denied to them in contemporary Australia by the system through a failure to acknowledge their existence or to have them cast as dead or non-functional. The positive response to the *Interim Framework* provided the Board with the legitimacy to commence the development of a more comprehensive syllabus in 2000.

The introduction of courses developed from the *Interim Framework* identified a range of issues which schools, communities, peak consultative bodies (such as the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages [FATSIL] and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group [AECG]), the NSW Depart-

ment of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) and the Board have worked to identify and address. These issues centre on the chronic undersupply of Aboriginal people who are confident and competent to teach the local language and the critical lack of language teaching and learning resources such as dictionaries, grammars and readers, grammatical primers etc.

Work has commenced, since the release of the *Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus* (BOS 2003c) [*Syllabus*] and the *NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy* (DAA 2004) on identifying the range of problems that continue to affect the successful implementation of language programs. DAA, and other key NSW government agencies such as the Board, DET, Juvenile Justice and Correctional Services, have commenced developing an overall strategic plan for NSW. FATSIL has also played a key role assisting in this process by making strong representations to the commonwealth on diverse matters including assured access to funds and the development of a national training framework for language workers interested in working in educational programs. At present there is a sense that significant progress is being made in addressing the plethora of issues that have held back the successful implementation of programs.

Some of the issues that schools started to address included the following:

- acknowledgment that the ownership of language is situated within the community
- identification of Aboriginal languages teachers/tutors who are capable and able to support school-based language learning
- need for ongoing training and development to support community language tutors working in schools
- assured funding to schools so that employment contracts can be honoured and programs commenced on time
- development and adoption of protocols that outline effective and appropriate ways of interacting with Aboriginal communities and individuals
- development of clear guidelines on copyright ownership of language knowledge used to support language programs

4.2.   *Syllabus* Development Process

On the surface, the development of the *Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus* (BOS 2003c) followed a familiar path used by all other syllabuses in NSW. While all developmental milestones were followed in the development of this syllabus, at key points crucial language decisions were required before the project could advance and the Board could comfortably endorse the development of this language course. General community agreement was necessary on the place and role of the *Syllabus* in language education, along with the broad directions that its development would take before the project could be effectively scoped. An initial step was to commission several educator/linguists to provide the Board with key issues papers on comparable language programs in both Australia and North

America.[2] These papers provided the Board with authoritative advice on the critical issues such as

- whether to attempt to develop a 'generic' syllabus that potentially allowed all 70 NSW languages to be the target language taught in schools, or alternatively to develop several language specific syllabuses.
- whether the course would be a language program (i.e., focusing on developing communicative language skills), or a linguistic type course that focused on the development of skills that would assist in the reclamation of languages.

4.3.   The *Syllabus*

The document[3] sets out to clearly and unambiguously map previously uncharted territory, melding community ownership, language pedagogy and linguistic principles and practices into one document for potentially all of the 70 languages of NSW. Extensive consultation during the developmental stages with Aboriginal communities has ensured input on such matters as language curriculum and pedagogy; language ownership and protocols; links between language, culture, and identity; and acknowledgement of the variety of language situations across NSW. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous linguists and teachers were involved in the writing of the outcomes-based *Syllabus* to ensure that it was appropriate to NSW Aboriginal languages. The implementation of the *Syllabus* in schools is one strategy within a broader mosaic of language revitalization activities that include community-based language activities, adult language classes and the production of language resources.

There are a number of crucial principles that the *Syllabus* wanted to embed within both its outcomes and content, or within the approach to curriculum and pedagogy implied within its construction. Centrally developed curriculum is far from being benign or value free when it comes to positioning Indigenous peoples, their culture, language or identity. Though in some locations this may be a more benign process than in others, there is little doubt that Indigenous students continue to suffer from the lack of real choices that they are presented with when studying within a mainstream educational environment.

4.4.   Principles of the *Syllabus*

It has been acknowledged that the development of this particular syllabus challenged some of the central tenets upon which other syllabuses are based. In mapping out the rationale, the syllabus document made a clear case to the Aboriginal peoples of NSW that a study of their languages was 'more' than a language program. The *Syllabus* had to resonate with their aspirations, allay fears about the further colonization of identity, and empower communities to master both the implementation processes and syllabus content, and to demonstrate that

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[2] See http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/aboriginal_research/index.html
[3] See http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_sc/pdf_doc/ab_language_k10_syl.pdf

the syllabus provided an opportunity to develop a coherent course of study that would be lead to effective communicative language learning. The empowerment of each community was to be achieved by both providing them with the decision making power, and assuring them that engagement with it would lead to real and sustainable learning outcomes for students. Within this regime, purposeful learning is linked to the development of positive senses of identity. In addition to the issue of community control are the following:

- *linkage of language, culture and identity*. The *Syllabus* unambiguously links language acquisition to the development of positive senses of Aboriginal culture past and present, and the capacity to talk the 'lingo', to the ratification of positive attitudes to being an Aboriginal person.
- *acknowledging the uniqueness of Australia's Indigenous languages*. The *Syllabus* is predicated on an acknowledgment of the inter-relationships between languages and location and the impacts that invasion and colonization had on the state of Aboriginal languages.
- *school supporting community aspirations*. One of the key underpinning syllabus objectives was to build sustainable partnerships between communities and schools through their engagement in the implementation of language programs. The essential authority for these programs has to be the community and their desire to see the reclamation of their languages. The aspirations of Aboriginal people to re-establish a place for their languages have been long known (Hoskins *et al*. 2000).
- *developing effective language teams*. The inclusion of community members and language teachers, schools, students and linguists into language teams has proven to be a key factor in establishing language work within a school and/or wider community language program. Each member brings a range of skills necessary to the development of an engaging language experience for students.
- *sustained learning experience based on the K-10 learning continuum, developing communicative competence*. The syllabuses' construction has been built on providing students with an opportunity to:
  - ➢ experience Aboriginal languages in a range of contexts through the integration of listening, reading, speaking and writing skills
  - ➢ gain knowledge of, and develop skills in the application of vocabulary and grammatical structures
  - ➢ compare and contrast linguistic features of Aboriginal languages
  - ➢ gain knowledge of, respond to and take pride in the unique heritage and contemporary culture of Aboriginal communities
  - ➢ be active in the revitalization of Aboriginal languages in NSW
- *building student-community links*. One of the stated aims of the *Syllabus* (BOS 2003c:14) is to increase links between schools, students learning and community language revival in the local Aboriginal community. It is hoped that students will become closely identified with language elders and other lan-

guage learners within their communities and they will forge strong links that build on a desire to become life long learners of language It is also envisaged that students will work on writing, translating or re-writing old texts as part of their course assessment. This material could be a part of the developing language texts required to support language reclamation.

4.5. *Syllabus* Support

The *Syllabus* and associated support documents acknowledge the diverse language environment of NSW in regard to the extent of language resources available and the stage of language revitalization that has been achieved. This diversity largely correlates with language location, as languages requiring the greatest reclamation are often found in the more urbanised areas of NSW. In these localities, language knowledge comes almost entirely from historical sources, and even those in the community who strongly identify with the language may remember only a few words. Active language revitalization programs, on the other hand, tend to be located in the central, west and north of the state, where language knowledge comes from both historical resources including oral recordings of fluent speakers, as well as from a few current speakers of the language. Sadly, many of these Elders with more extensive language knowledge have passed on in the last few decades. As Amery notes, there is "a big difference between the nature of an Awabakal or Dharuk program on the one hand, which are necessarily Language Reclamation programs, and Bundjalung or Gumbaynggirr programs, which are probably Language Revitalisation programs" (2002:13-14).

The Board of Studies has developed a suite of support resources to assist schools, Aboriginal languages teachers, and the broader Aboriginal community to understand the breadth of social, cultural and language issues embedded in successful implementation of the syllabus. Each of the documents/CDs addressed specific issues seen to impact on success of this project. These included assistance on language programming and assessment, facilitating positive school involvement and advice to parents/community in using the syllabus. These include

- *Aboriginal Languages: Advice on Programming and Assessment for Stages 4 and 5* (BOS 2003a)
  - ➢ community consultation and protocols advice
  - ➢ sample programs and teaching units Years 7-10
  - ➢ integration of curriculum development, effective language pedagogy and assessment for learning

- *Winangaylanha Dhayn-gu Gaay: Understanding Aboriginal languages* (BOS 2004b)
  - ➢ CD ROM – developed deeper community and teacher understanding of the *Syllabus* and its support documents, including the implementation of appropriate school and community protocols and the basics of effective language teaching methodology

> ➤ advisory documents on a range of contentious issues including those provided by teachers and community members
>> ▪ language choice for teaching
>> ▪ language resource development
>> ▪ effective models for community consultation

- *Aboriginal Languages K-10: Assessment for Learning in a Standards-Referenced Framework* (BOS 2004a)
  - ➤ while this advice is pertinent to all of the years of schooling, the curriculum materials are of particular interest to the years 7-10
  - ➤ interactive CD linking teaching, evidence of learning and effective curriculum development. This material and associated student work samples link the *Syllabus*, the *Aboriginal Languages: Advice on Programming and Assessment for Stages 4 and 5,* specifically the linked sample units of work and
  - ➤ focus – assessment of language learning as a key pedagogic tool for student learning
  - ➤ student work samples exemplifying the performance of students and how their work can be judged in accordance with the draft levels of achievement (BOS 2003b)

In addition to these specific support documents and interactive CD ROMs, the Board endorsed in 2003 the concept that an ongoing commitment was required to support schools in the implementation of the *Syllabus*. Project sites have been chosen to exemplify a range of locations and implementation issues that continue to impact on the success of language programs. The intention of this program has been to trial the *Syllabus* in a wide range of language ecologies represented within NSW. The program includes the following key features:
- variable language resources and contexts
  - ➤ there is a broad range of language ecologies represented within the state, with some languages well serviced with contemporary dictionaries, grammars and a developing range of teaching and learning resources to support a range of different stages of learning.
- effective teaching and learning
  - ➤ the dearth of trained Aboriginal people with either language knowledge or teacher training (especially in language teaching methodology) has meant that schools are encouraged to develop a team approach that incorporates language speakers (at the best level available within a given community), linguists and language teachers.
- school/community partnerships and language teams
  - ➤ schools are encouraged to develop an overarching group whose primary task is to provide a conduit to both the school and community and to advocate for the program within appropriate educational and local forums.

5. Some Comparisons Between NSW and California

Both California and NSW were settled early and each experienced a devastating downturn in the knowledge and use of Indigenous languages. In California there were around 100 Indigenous languages in 1800 (Hinton 1994) but more recently the situation can be described in these terms:

> California has more indigenous languages than almost any other part of the world; some fifty different languages still have speakers (Hinton 1994). But there are at least thirty and maybe more that have no speakers left; and every one of the approximately fifty languages still spoken is in what Michael Krauss labels a moribund state (1992). No language endemic to California is being learned at home by children; most are spoken only by elders (Hinton and Ahlers 1999:58).

One means of addressing these challenges has been through the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program. This began in 1993 under the auspices of the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival [AICLS – see www.aicls.org]. Basically the idea is to bring together an older person with language knowledge and one or more younger members of the language group for one-on-one language immersion (Hinton 1997, 2003; Hinton *et al*. 2002). We hope to emulate this very successful program in NSW and discussions have already begun with key stakeholders.

The following table summarizes some of the similarities and differences between California and NSW. It can be seen that although NSW is nearly twice the area of California, it has less than 20% of the population. Much of the population in both these states is concentrated along the coastline in major population centres like San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sydney – Sydney alone (4,000,000) has well over half the total population of NSW. In each case the Indigenous population is around 2% of the total state population.

	California	New South Wales
Area	157,000 square miles	*c*. 312,745 square miles
Coastline	700 miles	*c*. 1250 miles
Geography	More than San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the coast	More than Sydney and the coast
Population	34,488,000 [March 2003]	6,663,700
Indigenous population	627,562 – 1.9% of California; 15.2% of the whole Indigenous population of the U.S. [2000 census]	135,319 – 2% of NSW; 29.4% of the whole Indigenous population of Australia [2001 Census]
Indigenous languages	*c*. 100 in 1800 but more like 50 currently known	20-70
Language health	variable	variable

State Govt Policy on languages	??unlikely	NSW State Govt Policy on Indigenous languages
State-funded center for Indigenous languages	?role handled by AICLS but without State funding	NSW ALRRC
Database for languages of the state	??this role handled by the Survey of California and other Indian Languages	NSW ALDB [funded through ATSIS via NSW DAA]
State Syllabus for Indigenous Languages in schools	none	NSW Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus
Language restoration workshops	Breath of Life since 1996 (Hinton 1996)	Workshops/training for whole state still in planning stages
Master-Apprentice program	Operating since 1993	Approved in principle by Commonwealth for funding in 2005 but still in planning stages

Overall it can be seen that California has started earlier than NSW in assisting with the revitalization of its languages. However, NSW has made substantial gains over a short, recent period and will continue to look to California as a model for effective but appropriately consultative intervention.

6.   Issues Impacting on Existing School-based Programs

While NSW now has an endorsed Aboriginal languages syllabus that schools can draw on to develop language programs, an array of issues impact on the efforts of parents and communities, who with schools, struggle in delivering effective language programs.

Schools and teachers can and must play a vital part in the reclamation processes as they can provide a regime of learning based on developing and implementing an increasingly complex exposure to language that mirrors what is available in the home and within the community. For this to be a reality, teachers (whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) need to be skilled in language methodology as well as the language itself. It is envisaged that effective learning will be based on a coherent course designed around a consistent language teaching methodology that focuses on communicative language.

To achieve a critical mass of language learners in any community will require a commitment that has hitherto been singularly missing in many other educational programs. One of the critical issues to be addressed is to develop a level of pedagogic consistency that is based on pre-service and in-service training for certified teachers and a regime of training for Aboriginal language teachers. FATSIL is currently working with several commonwealth agencies on developing

a training framework that takes into account the widely differing contextual needs across Australia. It is seen that this framework will enable postsecondary and tertiary education providers to develop a range of educational programs that will allow for multiple entry and exit points for students. An essential aim of this project is to ensure that all training is accompanied with appropriate accredited recognition and with links to employment. This project is a critical component of the long-term aim to have school systems employ trained language Aboriginal teachers who have undertaken training in both mastering their language, as well as in tools of effective language teaching.

While the first two issues alerted the need for curriculum and pedagogic consistency to underpin effective language learning, the third issue focuses on the role and responsibilities of schools and their authorities to implement supportive policies and practices that properly acknowledge the clear aspirations of Aboriginal people in respect of the long-term reclamation of their languages, and which enable the development of effective teaching and learning environments. Schools will not be able to sustain the momentum for such programs without long-term commitments to fund, staff and provide on-going training and development and consultancy support for these programs. Schools must also be encouraged to develop partnerships with parents and community based on respectful protocols (BOS 2003b, FATSIL 2004).

7.   Conclusion

The languages of NSW have remained dormant as spoken languages for decades in many of the state's Aboriginal communities. For many, it may appear that the aspiration to rekindle the ancestral Indigenous languages of Australia is a forlorn hope, rooted in the past and ignoring the realities of 220 years of colonization. However, a deeply felt sense of identity invested in an affiliation to their language, along with a growing awareness of the possibilities of language reclamation has provided a keenness to the current activity occurring across the state and revived a hope that one day many of the original languages will once again be heard.

In this environment, the implementation of the *Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus* is one step in helping to support the revitalization of NSW Aboriginal languages. It has strong foundations in community consultation, constructivist curriculum theory, language pedagogy and linguistic principles. It aims to respond to the aspirations of Aboriginal people to reclaim their languages, and for their languages to be given the respect they deserve. As Jeannie Bell (2003:170) proclaims,

> Now, we're making this strong statement. We're saying we haven't lost our languages, we are still here, our languages are still here, our culture's still here, our land's still here. We want to see our identity as Aboriginal people recognized and respected in all its dimensions. Languages are a very strong part of that, and we want to see respect from non-Aboriginal people in the same way that they regard other languages of the world.

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REPORT 14

SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA AND
OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES

Language is Life
PROCEEDINGS OF THE 11TH ANNUAL
STABILIZING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES CONFERENCE

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