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Kurna Language Reclamation and the Formulaic Method

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Kaurna Language Reclamation and the Formulaic Method

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1. Introduction

This paper is based on an oral presentation given on 12 June 2004 at the 11th Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference, held at the University of California, Berkeley. As this paper concerns the use of Indigenous languages in the public domain, I would like to begin with my introduction at that conference:

Ngangkinna, Meyunna (Ladies & Gentlemen)

In accordance with Indigenous protocols practised in Australia, I recognise that we are meeting on Muwekma Ohlone land here at Berkeley. In the words of the Kaurna people where I come from:

Marni ngadlu banbabanbalyarnendi yaitya warrannabirra warrabatitya.

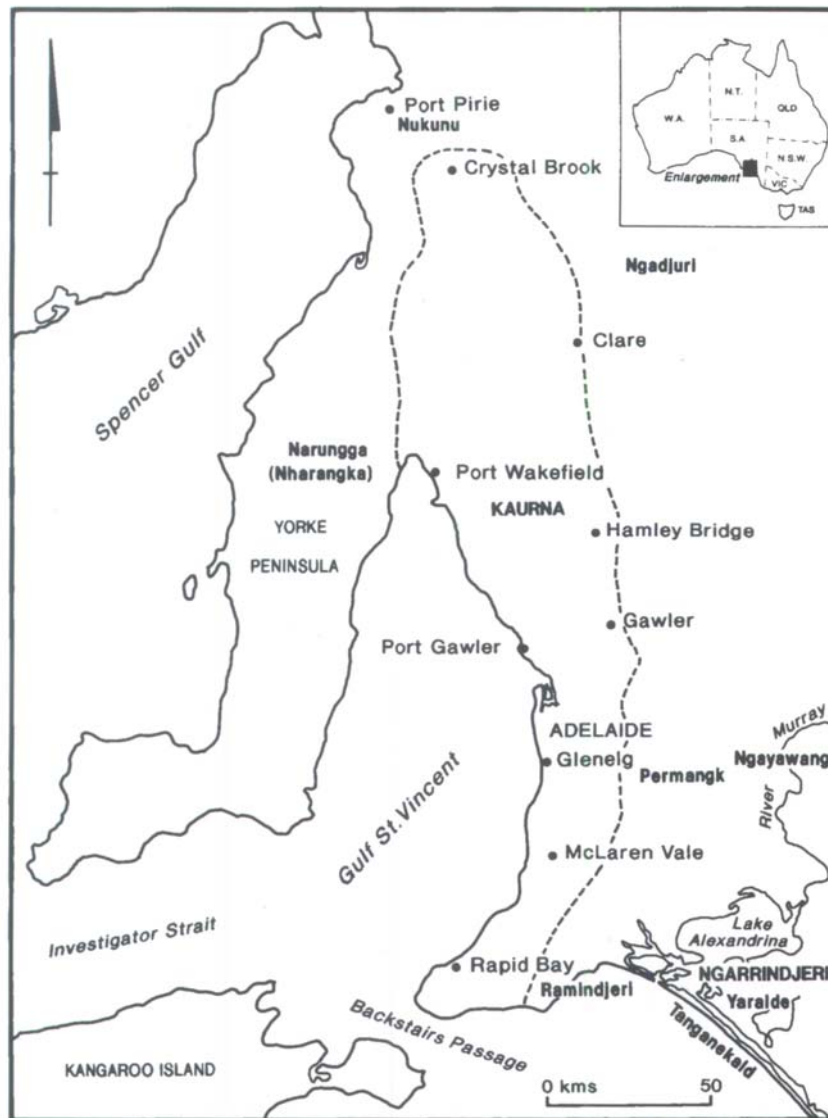
'It's good that we are meeting together at this conference to discuss Indigenous languages.'

In this paper there are four main areas that I want to address:

- The use of language in the **public domain**
- **Language development** and caretaker speech
- The **Formulaic Approach** for the introduction of sleeping languages
- **Language Planning** for sleeping languages and specifically, the emergence of **Kaurna Warra Pintyandi**, an informal Kaurna language planning body.

First, however, I need to provide some background and contextual information. Kaurna, the Indigenous language of the Adelaide Plains in South Australia, is a 'sleeping' language documented by German missionaries Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann in the mid-nineteenth century. There are no sound recordings of the language as it was spoken in the nineteenth century and there are many gaps in the documentation. However, we are fortunate in that some 3,000 to 3,500 words were recorded, a reasonable sketch grammar was written and many hundreds of sentences together with their English translations were recorded. The language is now being reclaimed from these historical records.

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The Kurna community is small, fragmented and dispersed across a metropolitan city and surrounding areas. There are several thousand Kurna descendants, but the number of people who actively identify primarily as a Kurna person number in the hundreds. There is no Kurna village, ghetto or suburb. The Kurna have no land that is under their full control, though increasingly local government is consulting and working with the Kurna community in the protection, recognition and development of certain sites of importance. All Kurna people speak English and have been doing so for many generations. In these circumstances, how might the language be introduced?

In this context, both Kurna language programs in schools and use within the public domain appear to be the key. Kurna is now taught to small numbers of students at all levels of education from preschool to university level. I am not going to say very much about the school programs as such in this paper, except to

acknowledge their importance and centrality as the powerhouse for language revival (see Amery 2000:153-178). Rather, I wish to focus here on language use in the public domain. The use of Kaurna language in the public domain, whilst superficial and perhaps somewhat artificial, plays a very important role in awareness raising, paving the way for more communicative use of the language. Although private domains, such as the family and the home, are typically the last bastions of retention of a language, a fact also noted by Hinton (2001:415), the family home is also one of the most difficult places in which to bring back the language, probably because it entails changing intimate behaviours and the most automatic and deeply engrained responses that operate outside conscious control.

2. Kaurna in the Public Domain

2.1. Songs

Work on Kaurna language began with songs, in particular a Songwriters Workshop in March 1990 funded by the Commonwealth government through the National Aboriginal Languages Program (NALP). Thirty-three songs were written in the three languages local to Adelaide and surrounding areas. Whilst most interest was focussed on Ngarrindjeri and Narungga, six Kaurna songs were included at the insistence of the local Elder, Auntie Josie Agius. In 1995 we embarked on a more ambitious Kaurna songbook project featuring more linguistically complex songs. This was finally published several years later (Schultz *et al.* 1999). Songs are still a very important aspect of Kaurna language revival. The Kaurna Plains School choir is frequently called upon to perform at public events. In June 1997 they wrote their own school song with both English and Kaurna versions. The Kaurna version is always sung with more passion and volume, a sure sign of the value that the children place on the Kaurna language. Nelson Varcoe, an Indigenous musician and songwriter involved in the original Songwriters Workshop in 1990, continues to write songs in Kaurna for special occasions, as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Nelson Varcoe's songs composed for special events.

<i>Karrauwirraparri</i> (Torrens River)	Written for the Water Music project	1995
<i>Warranna Munaintya</i> (Voices of the Dreaming)	Professional Development workshop for teachers of Indigenous languages in schools	Dec. 1995
<i>Nguya Nguya Murradlu</i> (Reconciliation)	Alberton PS Choir; South Australian Public Schools Music Society concerts	1997
<i>Yertabulti</i> (Port Adelaide)	Alberton PS choir at the opening of Port Adelaide Visitor Information Centre	Nov. 1997
<i>Piltawodli</i>	Journey of Healing reconciliation event	1999
<i>Karra</i> (river redgum)	Karra Exhibition, Telstra Adelaide Festival. Published in the catalogue (Thwaites 2000)	March 2000
<i>Warrabarna Kaurna</i> (Let Kaurna be Spoken)	Launch of <i>Warrabarna Kaurna</i> (Amery 2000)	2001

2.2. Naming Activity

Naming activity is a very important aspect of Kurna language restoration, though some might regard this as a trivial or superficial exercise. The act of naming asserts an identity of place or person. Many people won't think twice about it – it's just a name – but some will stop to think. Even amongst those who don't stop to think about the name but simply use it, this usage may have a deeper subconscious effect, just as advertising has been shown to have such subliminal power amongst those who say they take no notice of advertisements. When people understand the name and its historical and cultural significance the impact of course is even greater.

The use of Kurna names in the modern period began in 1980 when a Kurna woman sent a young Indigenous man off to the archives in search of a name for a new alternative school being established. Warriappendi 'to seek; find' is still used to this day. Since then, a number of Kurna placenames have been officially reinstated, most notably Karrawirra Parri (lit. 'redgum forest river') the original name for the Torrens River, which runs through the centre of the city of Adelaide. The Adelaide City Council has embarked on an extensive Kurna naming project, culminating in the Kurna naming of all 30 parks and six squares within its jurisdiction and the installation of signage with full explanation of the names and the known Indigenous heritage of these localities. It has done this within its Aboriginal Reconciliation initiatives (Adelaide City Council 2004).¹

Moves to dual name Tarndanyangga - Victoria Square, in the very heart of Adelaide, began when members of the Aboriginal Reconciliation movement held an event there for National Sorry Day on 26 May 2001. People just started using the name Tarndanyangga unofficially and the Council followed suite the following year with its official recognition.

Kurna Warra Pintyandi, consisting of a small group of Kurna language activists, undertook a project to install recordings of the Kurna names on the Adelaide City Council's website so that the public may become more familiar with the way these words sound. I will say more about Kurna Warra Pintyandi later.

Other local councils within the metropolitan area and surrounding country towns are also engaging in a certain amount of Kurna place-naming activity.² Previously un-named creeks, newly established wetlands and parks etc. have been given Kurna names. Probably the first and most important original place-name to be re-instated is that of Warriparinga (lit. 'windy river place') in 1992, used in

¹ The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established in 1991 by an Act of federal parliament supported by both houses of parliament and both sides of politics. The vision adopted by the Council was one of "a united Australia which respects this land as ours: values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equality for all" (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation brochure *Reconciliation and Its Key Issues*).

² The four southern councils (City of Onkaparinga, Holdfast Bay, Marion and Yankalilla) together with the Geographical Names Unit and KWP have established a Kurna Places website (<http://www.kurnaplacenames.com>).

reference to an area of land opposite Flinders University on the Sturt River (Warriparri). This site is immensely important to Kurna people, being the site where the Kurna Dreaming ancestor Tjilbruke's nephew Kulultuwi was killed for having broken the law. Whilst the Warriparinga site was previously known as Laffer's Triangle, after the Laffer family who owned a small vineyard there, it is now known universally as Warriparinga.³ An interpretive centre, sculptures and signage have been erected featuring a significant amount of Kurna text. Warriparinga has become a regular gathering site each month when friendship fires are lit every full moon. These occasions are very relaxed affairs where anyone is welcome to come and sit around the fire and share in stories and learn about the history of the site and of the Kurna people. An evening Kurna language course is taught at the centre each week.

Many Indigenous organizations, such as Tarndanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, or Indigenous units or programs within government departments that are located within Kurna country now bear Kurna names. Buildings and rooms within certain premises are sometimes given Kurna names.

Some Kurna people have adopted Kurna names and have named their children officially with Kurna names. For instance, Auntie Alice Rigney, Principal of Kurna Plains School for 10 years, adopted the name Wallara 'clear-headed; intelligent; clever'. Her son, Lester Rigney, an academic at Flinders University, adopted the name Irabinna 'warrior' and named his children Tikari 'future' and Tarniwarra 'the noise of the breakers'. Pets belonging to Kurna people are also often given Kurna names, such as a cat named Milte 'red', dogs named Marni Kadli 'good dog' and Ngaityo Kadli 'my dog' and a magpie named Kurraka 'magpie'.

Indications are that this Kurna naming activity is increasing as exposure to the language increases and people become more familiar with Kurna words and expressions.

2.3. Public Art

We also witness the use of Kurna words, phrases and text in public artworks throughout the metropolitan area. The first such usage was in the Yerrakartarta installation established in the forecourt of the Adelaide Convention Centre on North Terrace in 1995. This installation, in addition to the name Yerrakartarta 'at random', featured numerous Kurna words (names of animals and natural features) plus a short text:

Kurna yerta. Natta atto nanga; yakko atto bukki nakki.
Kurna land now 1SgERG see not 1SgERG before saw
'This is Kurna country. I know it now. Before I didn't.'

This was taken directly from Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840) with the addi-

³ See <http://www.marion.sa.gov.au/Web/webmar.nsf/Lookup/Warriparinga>

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tion of the words *Kaurna yerta*. Since then public art featuring Kaurna text has appeared in a range of high profile locations including the Adelaide Festival Centre, the State Library of South Australia, the Adelaide Railway Station and within Adelaide's three universities.



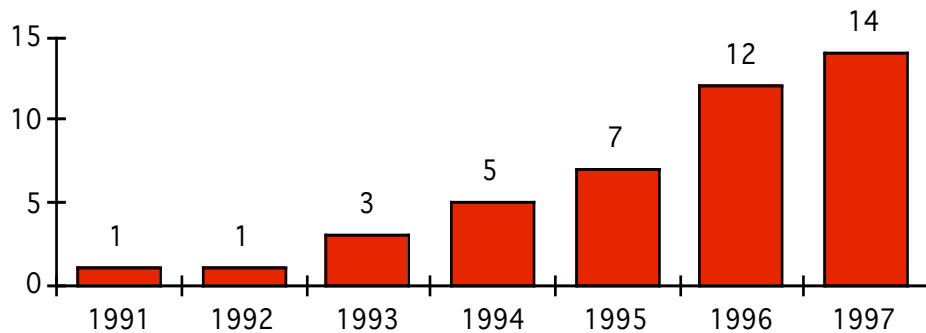
The Kaurna language is also used verbally in the public domain to deliver speeches of welcome, discussed later, to introduce cultural performances and to sing Kaurna songs.



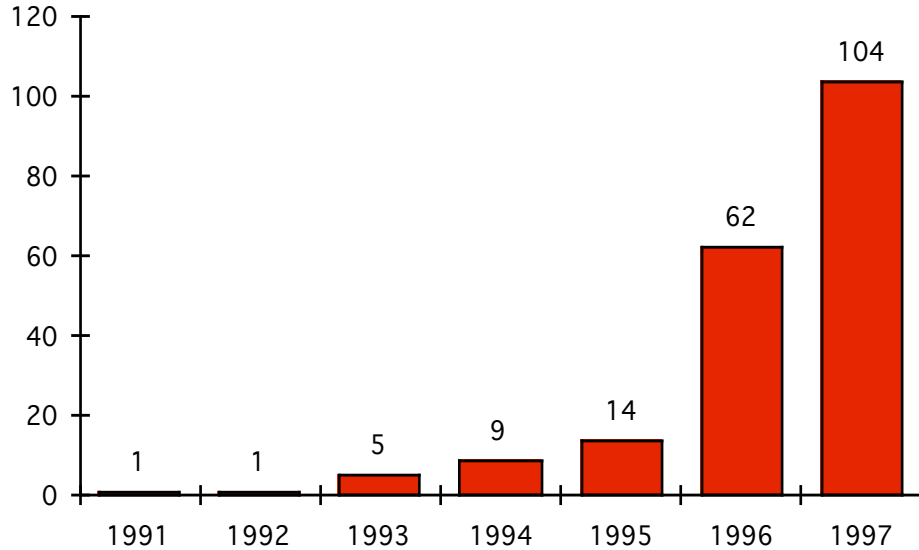
2.4. Welcome Protocols

In about 1991, Uncle Lewis O'Brien gave the first speech of welcome to Kaurna country in the Kaurna language. Nelson Varcoe gave an extended speech at the opening of Yaitya Warra Wodli, South Australia's Aboriginal Languages Centre in February 1993. Since then, the rate at which Kaurna speeches are given has increased exponentially, as shown in the following two graphs:

Graph 1: Number of individuals giving Kaurna speeches in a given year (1991-1997).



Graph 2: Kaurna speeches in public (1991-1997).



There is demand from Kaurna people to learn how to give Kaurna speeches. Accordingly, we sought funds to mount a project to develop a set of Kaurna welcome protocols, and to disseminate these on a CD and accompanying booklet. We set out to produce two CDs, one a pedagogical tool with a basic range of speeches, and a second archival CD that included a number of speeches given at major events so that these might be recorded for posterity. The following minimalist speech, devised in a workshop on welcome protocols, has been established

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as a template for Kurna people to learn and expand according to their ability and the context (specific occasion) of the speech:

A Minimalist Kurna Speech of Welcome

Ngangkinna, meyunna! Na marni?

Ngai narri _____.

Martuityangga Kurna meyunna, ngai wanggandi “Marni naa budni Kurna yertaanna.”

Ngaityo yakkanandalya, yungandalya.

Translation

Ladies and gentlemen, are you (all) good? (i.e. hello)

My name is _____

On behalf of the Kurna people I say “It’s good that you (all) came to Kurna country” (i.e. welcome)

My dear sister(s) (and) brother(s). (i.e. thank you)

More recently there has been a desire from some non-Indigenous people to acknowledge the fact that they are on Kurna land, just as I acknowledged that we were meeting on Muwekma Ohlone land during the conference at Berkeley. At its meeting of 27 May 2002, the Adelaide City Council accepted the need to acknowledge the traditional lands of the Kurna people at the opening of every Council meeting with the following words:

“Adelaide City Council acknowledges that we are meeting on the traditional country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today.”

We are encouraging Council to go a step further with a brief acknowledgement in the Kurna language. A full translation of their English statement would be something like

Adelaide City Councilrlo tampendi, ngadlu Kurna yertangga banbabanbalyarnendi (inbarendi). Kurna meyunna yaitya mattanya Womma Tardanyako.

Parnako yailtya, parnuko tappa purruna, parnuko yerta ngadlu tampendi. Yellaka Kurna meyunna itto yailtya, tappa purruna, yerta kuma burro martendi, burro warriappendi, burro tangka martulyaiendi.

This would be far too much of a challenge for Councillors to learn, at least initially. But a very brief statement of acknowledgement in the Kurna language

might be more acceptable as follows:

Kaurna meyunna, Kaurna yerta, ngadlu tampendi.
Kaurna people Kaurna land we recognise
'We recognise Kaurna people and their land.'

The Catholic Education Office approached us in 2002 for a set of Kaurna words that students in Catholic schools could utter at school assemblies in acknowledgement of the owners of the land on which the school is built. The following statement was formulated:

Ngadlu tampendi Kaurna meyunna yerta mattanya Womma Tarndanyako.
We recognise Kaurna people land owner plain Adelaide-of
'We recognise (that) Kaurna people are the landowners and custodians of the Adelaide Plains.'

As has been seen, there is wide scope for use of the Kaurna language in the public domain, precisely because it is the language of the land where a large metropolitan city is now located. With a population of about 1 million, Adelaide is Australia's third or fourth largest city (on a par with Brisbane) and is the only sizable city in South Australia. In the same way, there is considerable scope for the use of Indigenous languages of other major cities, for example Dharuk in Sydney, Woiwurrung in Melbourne, Ngunnawal in Canberra, Noongar in Perth and Larrakiya in Darwin. On the other hand, there is considerably less opportunity for the use of other South Australian languages in the public domain. Thus, for example, there are many more Ngarrindjeri people than there are Kaurna, and more documented language resources are available for Ngarrindjeri of the lower Murray and Coorong to the east of Kaurna country, and whilst there would be opportunities for the use of Ngarrindjeri in public events in a range of towns along the Murray River, these opportunities simply would not arise so often as in a large city. Diyari, a sleeping language from the northeast of the state fares much worse still in this regard, as there is no town or centre of human habitation at all within Diyari territory. As a result, practically all Diyari live on someone else's land in centres like Port Augusta, a linguistic crossroads where the Nukunu landowners themselves are outnumbered by neighbouring Adnyamathanha, Kukada and Barngarla, as well as Arabana, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and others from further afield.

I imagine many opportunities would exist in North America for the similar use of sleeping languages that are associated with large urban centres.

3. Kaurna Language Development

From the outset of attempts to reclaim and re-introduce Kaurna, steps have been taken to transform the language for use in the modern world, as opposed to learning and using the language as a relic. In the 1990 Kaurna workshop, Kaurna

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Elder, Auntie Josie Agius, noticed the word *tikketikketti* ‘chair’ (derived from *tikkandi* ‘to sit’) and *bakkebakketti* ‘knife’ (derived from *bakkendi* ‘to cut’). Accordingly when Nelson Varcoe wrote a short children’s story that year in Kaurna we used the word *padnipadnitti* ‘car’ developed by analogy with the former. Cars were not around when Kaurna was documented, so either we had to borrow from English or develop our own term using word formation patterns existing in the language. Since then scores of new terms have been added as the need arises. Some examples are found in Table 2.

Of course, many languages do this. Many thousands of new terms have been added to Maori (Harlow 1993, Maori Language Commission 1996). Hebrew has been completely modernized (Kutscher 1982), such that Israeli jet fighter pilots are able to communicate with each other in Hebrew. Many languages in North America have also embraced new terminologies. In Australia, there has been some reluctance to develop new terms in some languages, where the languages are viewed as a relic and attempts to introduce new terms might be viewed as interference by linguists and outsiders.

Table 2: Kaurna neologisms.

New Kaurna Term	English Translation	Etymology
<i>mukarndo</i>	computer	<i>mukamuka</i> ‘brain’ + <i>karndo</i> ‘lightning’
<i>warraityatti</i>	telephone	<i>warra</i> ‘voice’ + <i>kaitya-</i> ‘to send’ + <i>-tti</i> ‘thing’
<i>turraityatti</i>	television	<i>turra</i> ‘image’ + <i>kaitya-</i> ‘to send’ + <i>-tti</i> ‘thing’
<i>tampitirkandi</i>	to read	<i>tampi-</i> ‘to know; recognise’ + <i>tirka-</i> ‘to know; learn’ + <i>-ndi</i> ‘present tense’
<i>tipomarngo</i>	switch	<i>tipo</i> ‘spark’ + <i>marngo</i> ‘button’
<i>wornubalta</i>	nappy (i.e. diaper)	<i>wornu</i> ‘bum’ + <i>balta</i> ‘covering’
<i>kurimai</i>	pizza	<i>kuri</i> ‘circle’ + <i>mai</i> ‘food’
<i>nurlemai</i>	banana	<i>nurle</i> ‘curved’ + <i>mai</i> ‘food’
<i>tukuwingkura</i>	microwave	<i>tuku</i> ‘small’ + <i>wingkura</i> ‘wave’
<i>Yiitya</i>	Easter	borrowed from English and adapted to fit the Kaurna sound system

If we wish to teach languages in schools, the first thing teachers and curriculum writers want are terms for numbers and colours. Kaurna, like many other Indigenous languages in Australia has few number terms as such:

- kuma* ‘one’
- purlaitye* ‘two’
- marnkutye* ‘three; a few’
- ngarraitya* ‘many’

In addition the constructed numbers *yerrabula* ‘four’ (derived from *yerra* ‘separate; distinct’ and *bula* ‘two’) *purlaitye purlaitye* ‘four’, *yerrabula kuma* ‘five’ and *yerrabula purlaitye* ‘six’ are documented.⁴

Fortunately in the case of Kurna, and other neighbouring languages of the Thura-Yura subgroup, whilst the Kurna had a restricted set of numbers as such, they had a set of birth-order names from first-born up to ninth-born and also differentiated between male and female. Thus I was able to use the root of these birth-order names to construct a set of numbers five to nine. Then by using *irka* ‘heap’ for tens, *parto irka* ‘big heap’ for hundreds, and reduced forms of *tauatta* ‘many’ for thousands and *wiwurra* ‘multitude’ for millions, a full-blown base-10 number system was born. This still left *kutyō* ‘a few’ and *ngarraitya* ‘many’ operating outside the number system with their original meanings.

Whilst I had some reservations in proposing this new number system as it is a radical shift away from the original language, it has been warmly embraced by Kurna people and taught for a number of years now at Kurna Plains School.

3.1. Caretaker Speech

Normal patterns of intergenerational transmission have been totally disrupted for sleeping languages such as Kurna. How do we go about re-establishing intergenerational transmission? Do we teach the children and get the children to teach the adults? There is some evidence to suggest that parents of children attending Kurna Plains School are learning some words and expressions from their children. However, if we teach the adults they are in a position to introduce the language prior to attending school.

Learning to speak a language can be a threatening experience, especially if it is one’s own language where to make mistakes or stumble in public carries with it potential loss of face. But if we can encourage mums, dads, aunties, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers and significant others to use Kurna with babies and very small children, these children will only give positive feedback and reinforcement, irrespective of which language in which they are spoken to. But in order for this to happen, at least in the Kurna case, we first need to provide them with the linguistic ammunition and develop a range of Kurna expressions suitable for use in these contexts. Recorded Kurna sentences, almost without exception, emerged from contexts of men addressing men (often the missionaries themselves). There are certainly no recorded utterances such as “Let me change your nappy”⁵ or “Have you got wind?” However, using the grammar, extant vocabulary and a knowledge of Kurna word-forming processes, it is not overly difficult to devise equivalent expressions. This is exactly what we began to do in a series of workshops in November 2000.

⁴ An early French observer, Gaimard (1833), tried to elicit numbers 1 to 10 and the numeral 20, but these are most unreliable (see Amery 1996).

⁵ “Diaper” is the American English of the Australian English “nappy”.

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We first set about identifying a range of situations in which adults might interact with babies and young children, and a range of associated language functions as outlined in the following chart:

LANGUAGE FUNCTION	LANGUAGE SITUATION
Endearment - expressing affection	Feeding & Mealtime (& Cooking)
Positive reinforcement	Bathing
Warnings	Getting Dressed & ready to go out
Placating, reassuring, comforting	Nappy changing & Toilet training
Calling, beckoning, attention seeking	Sleep time & Story time
Naming and Categorizing	Play - around the house & in garden
- Body awareness, parts & functions	Kindy & Early Childhood Centre
- Introducing Kin	School - in classroom & yard
Commands	Outings - going for walks & in car
Verbal games - e.g. same & different	Crying Baby & Sickness
Greetings	Shopping
Leave takings	Sport
Counting	Dealing with Pets and Animals
The Environment - weather & seasons	
Places & Placenames	

(from Amery and Gale 2000:20)

This area has been further developed and included within our Kaurna Learner's Guide with accompanying CD (Amery and Kaurna Warra Pintyandi 2007).

3.2. Funeral Protocols

The idea of developing a set of protocols, so that funerals could be conducted in the Kaurna language, also emerged during the Kaurna Warra Pintyandi (Developing Kaurna Language) workshops in November 2000. Accordingly, in 2003 we sought funds from the University of South Australia for the Kaurna Funeral Protocols project. We began by translating several often-sung and well-loved hymns: *What a Friend we have in Jesus*, *Amazing Grace*, *The Old Rugged Cross*, *Till We Meet Again* and *How Great Thou Art*. We also translated the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm into Kaurna and have discussed possible formats for liturgy, rang-

ing from straight translations of existing Lutheran funeral service liturgy to devising liturgy centred on Indigenous spiritual beliefs embodied in the Dreaming. Kurna people have been engaged in discussing amongst themselves aspects of traditional culture that have survived (such as the use of gypsum to whiten the face of mourners), aspects that are known from historical sources, but no longer practised (such as building a fire on the grave or wrapping the corpse in paper-bark), drawing comparisons with funeral rites of neighbouring groups and working out which of these practices are feasible to reinstate now. The project culminated in the publication of a book, CD and sympathy cards (Amery and Rigney 2006).

Funerals are what bring Nungas⁶ together all too frequently, both because of the very short life expectancy and the remarkably strong and intact extended family networks. Funerals are situations that require ceremony and formulaic speech. As such they are an important strategy for language re-introduction.

A number of Kurna individuals are actively planning their own funerals and their own liturgy in Kurna language. For this to be enacted they need to be planned well beforehand with all the family involved, because it is the family who has to carry it off. It will be difficult to initiate a funeral with Kurna liturgy, because the language is probably not at the forefront when family are grieving. Once the first few take place, no doubt it will become easier to implement. At the moment we are still in the preparation phase.

Nelson Varcoe, who has been involved in Kurna language revival for many years, is completing his training as a pastor in the Lutheran Church. He should be well placed to initiate activity should the family so desire.

4. The Formulaic Approach

All these projects, development of caretaker speech, welcome protocols and funeral protocols, are in keeping with the Formulaic Approach, which I have proposed (see Amery 2000:209-212, 2001:200-204) for the reintroduction of sleeping languages. Rather than teaching grammar or attempting language immersion, the language is introduced bit by bit in the form of well-formed chunks, within Kurna people's English.

Within the Formulaic Approach I propose that people be encouraged to learn and use frequently used utterances, beginning with exclamations (such as *Paitya!* 'Deadly!'⁷ or *Paia!* 'Wow!'), question words (such as *Wa?* 'Where?', *Ngaintya?* 'What?' *Nganna?* 'Who?', *Waminna?* 'What's up?' or 'What's the matter?') and

⁶ Nunga is a term of self-reference used by Indigenous people of southern South Australia. It derives from Wirangu, a language spoken on the far west coast of South Australia, where it simply means 'person'. This term contrasts with Yura in the Flinders Ranges, Anangu in the northwest of South Australia, Koorie on the east coast of Australia, Noongah in the southwest of Australia, Yolngu in northeast Arnhemland, Northern Territory, Murri in much of Queensland etc.

⁷ *Deadly* is used in Aboriginal English in much the same way as *terrific* is used in mainstream English varieties. The use of *deadly* in this way may well be derived from the similar use of its counterpart *paitya* in Kurna.

responses (such as *Ne!* 'Yes!', *Yakko* 'No', *Wointye* 'Maybe', *Marni* 'Good' etc.), which are easy to learn and can stand alone. In the early stages the response to these Kurna utterances might be in English.

Mealtimes are contexts in which the same phrases (for example *Bakkadla parniappendo!* 'Pass me the salt!', *Pinyatta padlonendai* 'I'd like some sugar', *Taityoai* 'I'm hungry', *Burliai* 'I'm satiated', etc.) can be used meaningfully every day, even several times a day. Furthermore, all can be used as stand-alone well-formed utterances. Once the easiest, shortest utterances have been mastered, the level of complexity can be gradually increased with longer, more complex constructions introduced, but always stressing the utterances that are used most often.

As this repertoire expands, gradually understandings of grammar will emerge as learners begin to recognise the same patterns recurring. For instance, in the utterances cited above, learners might notice *-ai* reoccurring on the end of *padlonendai*, *burliai* and *taityoai*. In fact, *-ai* here is a pronominal first-person singular clitic 'I'. Adult learners will enquire about the similarities they notice when they are ready to find out, and at that stage some explanation of aspects of grammar can be given.

There are several different positions or perspectives taken by different researchers as to the relationship between English and the reviving language. Leanne Hinton strongly advocates no English for prolonged periods of the day in her Master-Apprentice approach (Hinton 1994:235-247). Whilst I see the need to break away from English, I argue that insisting on no English for long periods is probably not feasible in situations, such as for the Kurna, where the language has long lain dormant.

The natural tendency is for people to relexify their English, and certainly this is what is happening with attempts to speak Ngarrindjeri, a language located to the east of Kurna. Ngarrindjeri people will insert Ngarrindjeri words, often with English plural, possessive or tense suffixes, into their English. As they learn more words from historical sources, these too are incorporated. The result might be a text where all the words are Ngarrindjeri, but the grammar is entirely English.

In the Kurna context, I have argued for a middle course and have encouraged the use of well-formed utterances within English. I try to encourage people to move beyond isolated words and engage with the grammar. In a recent review of Amery (2000), I have been criticized for this approach (Bower 2003:196).

5. Language Planning

5.1. Kurna Warra Pintyandi (www.adelaide.edu.au/kwp)

Kurna Warra Pintyandi (KWP) grew out of a series of Kurna language development workshops held in Nov.-Dec. 2000. We decided to continue meeting each month, to deal with requests as they arose and to continue our work on projects to expand and develop the Kurna language. In this way, the informal language planning body we call Kurna Warra Pintyandi was born. We set an agenda for the meeting each month and maintain formal minutes, but we are not an incorporated body. Funds, including a small grant from the Adelaide City Council and

several small donations, are auspiced by the University of Adelaide.

Publications, such as the Kurna wordlist (Amery 2003) are now published by KWP and redevelopment of the Kurna pages on the Adelaide City Council website have been accomplished through KWP.

Since KWP has been established, many groups and individuals have approached us for advice on Kurna names, translations, maps and protocols. This includes government departments, private companies, education providers and students. Some have attempted to consult with us about broader issues, though we have had to remind them that our focus is specifically on the language. For matters beyond language we refer people to the representative Kurna organisations.

5.2. Relationship Between KWP and Other Kurna Bodies

There are several organisations that claim to represent the Kurna people. The Kurna Heritage Committee was initially established in about 1985. This grew into the Kurna Aboriginal Community and Heritage Association (KACHA Inc.). As a result of internal governance issues and an impasse with the state government, Kurna Meyunna Inc. and Kurna Elders were established, though KACHA Inc. continued as an organisation representing a subsection of Kurna people, based mainly around Warriparinga and the southern metropolitan area. When the Kurna Native Title claim was being formulated, there was considerable pressure on the Kurna to speak with one voice. Kurna Yerta Incorporated (the Native Title claimant group) was formed and includes Kurna people from all three groups. Several other groups have also emerged in recent times.

These representative Kurna bodies are primarily concerned with heritage and land issues such as site clearance work for major developments. Whilst language and cultural heritage certainly comes within the scope of these organisations, it has never been a high priority.

In 2003, a letter was sent by KWP to the other Kurna organisations, informing them of our existence and outlining our role as we see it. There has been no formal reply to KWP correspondence, and no objections have been raised. Members of KACHA Inc. and Kurna Meyunna Inc. have attended KWP meetings. For a full history and up-to-date account of the activities of KWP see Amery and Rigney (2007).

5.3. Requests for Kurna Names

As mentioned previously, Kurna naming activity in the modern period began in 1980. Since then many requests for Kurna names have been directed towards Kurna Elders, such as Uncle Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien and Auntie Alice Wallara Rigney, or to Aboriginal organisations, to institutions such as the South Australian Museum that deal with Indigenous issues, or to others with knowledge and expertise in the language. Many, though not all, of these requests are directed or re-directed to me.

For a number of years I provided technical advice in relation to requests for names, though I always felt a little uncomfortable in doing this, and advised the

person making the request that they should consult Kurna people for permission to use the name. If the request came by e-mail I would usually send a copy of the reply to Uncle Lewis, or if I remembered I might mention the matter to him or other Kurna people when I met them next.

We needed a process so that more than one or two people were involved in making decisions about the language. For some years we talked about the need for a committee to provide advice and approval for naming requests and I was pleased when Kurna Warra Pintyandi was formed and people were keen to meet and deal with these matters.

At our meeting of 24 September 2003 we decided to establish some terms of reference for the KWP group and a set of procedures for dealing with naming requests. I drew up a draft information sheet that also set out the terms of reference for KWP. This was prepared so that it might be sent out to people who approached us for Kurna names or translations. This draft information sheet was discussed and refined at the following meeting on 22 October 2003. Nelson Varcoe was commissioned to design a logo for the group. He came up with message sticks in the form of the letter K. With that, KWP became a little more formalised.

5.4. Ownership and Copyright Issues

Like it or not, the Kurna language is in the public domain. The main source, Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840), is not subject to copyright because more than 50 years have passed since the death of the authors. However, Kurna people take a different view and assert moral ownership over this and other Kurna language material. There has been much talk of copyrighting the language as an Aboriginal relic under the Indigenous Heritage Act, in the same way that items of material culture might be registered.

Kurna people themselves have been reluctant to post much Kurna language on the web and have generally disapproved of others doing so. Consequently, course material I have posted is password protected and, theoretically, only available to students of Kurna and Kurna people themselves. However, in the last few years a non-Indigenous person living in Canberra, Bill Woerlee, has posted the Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840) Kurna wordlist on his webpage, and introduced a number of errors in the process. His introductory pages make statements about the Kurna language that are quite out of step with the thinking and feeling of Kurna language enthusiasts as follows:

Efforts are being made now to resurrect the language in the Adelaide region. While these efforts may be interesting for historical and cultural reasons, the imperative for learning the language has long since passed away. The good folk of Adelaide will not accept the learning of an ancient language as a substitute for English because of sentimental reasons. Even these attempts to revive the Kurna language are beset with massive problems. The main being to express the ideas and concepts contained within the 250 million [sic] recorded English words so that Kurna could be a functional language. Thus we look at the Kurna language as a historical record of these people rather than a pathway to the future.

(from <http://kurna.tripod.com/>, accessed 10 November 2004)

Woerlee seems not to have consulted Kurna people in relation to these remarks, certainly none of those who have been active in efforts to reclaim the language. Kurna Warra Pintyandi is currently considering options for taking action on this issue.

Kurna Warra Pintyandi has provided sound recordings and information on Kurna names which have been installed on the Adelaide City Council website so that the public may become more familiar with the way these words sound.

6. Conclusion

Language ecologies are highly differentiated and arise in response to a specific set of social, political, historical, geographical, demographic and linguistic parameters. What holds true for one set of circumstances cannot necessarily be easily replicated in another. Nonetheless, Kurna language reclamation has been informed by language movements elsewhere in Australia, in New Zealand, North America, as well as by Cornish and Hebrew language revival. In turn, I hope that the Kurna language movement will afford insights and ways forward for other language movements operating in similar circumstances, particularly those sleeping languages associated with large urban centres.

The Formulaic Method and associated development of caretaker speech forms, welcome protocols, funeral protocols and other formula-driven speech offers a non-threatening means of re-introducing a sleeping language that is within the grasp of most people and performs functions in accordance with the needs of those attempting to re-assert, affirm or reclaim a distinct cultural identity.

Kurna Warra Pintyandi is a small informal body, but it performs a very important function within the context of Kurna language reclamation and revival. It works because of the passion and continuing interest of a small band of Kurna language enthusiasts, teachers of Kurna language and linguists. It provides a forum whereby requests can be dealt with in a transparent way and brings people together to focus on the language.

The projects I have discussed here are works in progress. Whilst there are many good ideas, finding the time and resources to complete these projects is a constant challenge. Kurna people involved stress the importance of the process, or ‘the journey’, and are well aware that there are no quick fixes. They often say, “... it has taken 200 years to destroy our languages. It will take at least that long to get them back.” Engagement in the language revival process, however long it takes, is culturally affirming and reinforces identity for these language activists.

Yaitya warranna warrabarna! ‘Let Indigenous languages be spoken!’

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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***

June 10-13, 2004

University of California at Berkeley

Wesley Y. Leonard and Stelómethet Ethel B. Gardner, Editors

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