

Ngapartji Ngapartji Media Release
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Senior Aboriginal elders applaud Government's new national approach to preserve languages

“Kuwari nganana pukularinyi panya Governmentngku Ananguku wangkaku palyanmanu. Iriti tjana wangka walytjangku kawalinu Anangu maru tjutangku Australiala winkingka.”

Alison Milyika Carroll, a senior Pitjantjatjara woman from Ernabella in South Australia on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, echoes in her first language the excitement of many elders in her community, about the Australian Government's National Indigenous Languages Policy announced this week.

Speaking on return from the Garma Festival in Arnhem Land her words translate from her first language of Pitjantjatjara into English:

“Today we are very excited that the Government has implemented a policy with regard to indigenous languages. Through history across Australia Indigenous people have experienced huge loss of language.”

“Kala pukularinyi panya kuwari Government-tu Anangu maru tjuta alpamilani wangka tjanampa ngurira malakungku mantjintjaku munu wangka walytjangku wangkantjaku.”

“So we are thrilled that the Government is extending assistance to Indigenous people to research and revive their languages and be able to speak their native languages.”

“Panya nganana nganampa wangka Pitjantjatjara kanyini nganampa ngurangka munula wangka walytjangku wangkanyi – nganamapa wangka.”

“As you may understand we still speak Pitjantjatjara in our country - we speak our own language.”

Ms Carroll has been travelling around Australia with the award winning multi-lingual play Ngapartji Ngapartji as a member of its choir. The haunting women's choir resounds in the play which tells the historical story of how Aboriginal people were affected by atomic bomb testing in the Western desert in the 1950's and 60's.

The Ngapartji Ngapartji group are also founders of a world-first online Pitjantjatjara language program and have been one of the many groups who have been calling for a national languages policy for the last five years.

Creative Producer Alex Kelly says, “This week we celebrate the outcome of decades of work and lobbying by indigenous language speakers, linguists, community language workers and activists.”

“We applaud the Australian Government for turning their attention to what has become an urgent bid to take more than 100 indigenous languages off the critically endangered list and to

bring the worlds oldest languages and their survival to national attention. Indigenous languages in Australia will not survive unless governments, state and federal, champion them.”

“Knowledge and protection of language and culture can have flow on benefits into broader educational, employment, health and environmental outcomes.”

“The establishment of this policy recognises this and is crucial if Australia hopes to Close the Gap.”

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