

*Language landscapes of  
Indigenous children in remote  
Australia*

Jane Simpson

University of Sydney

ILC/ALS, Adelaide: **Kaurna yerta**

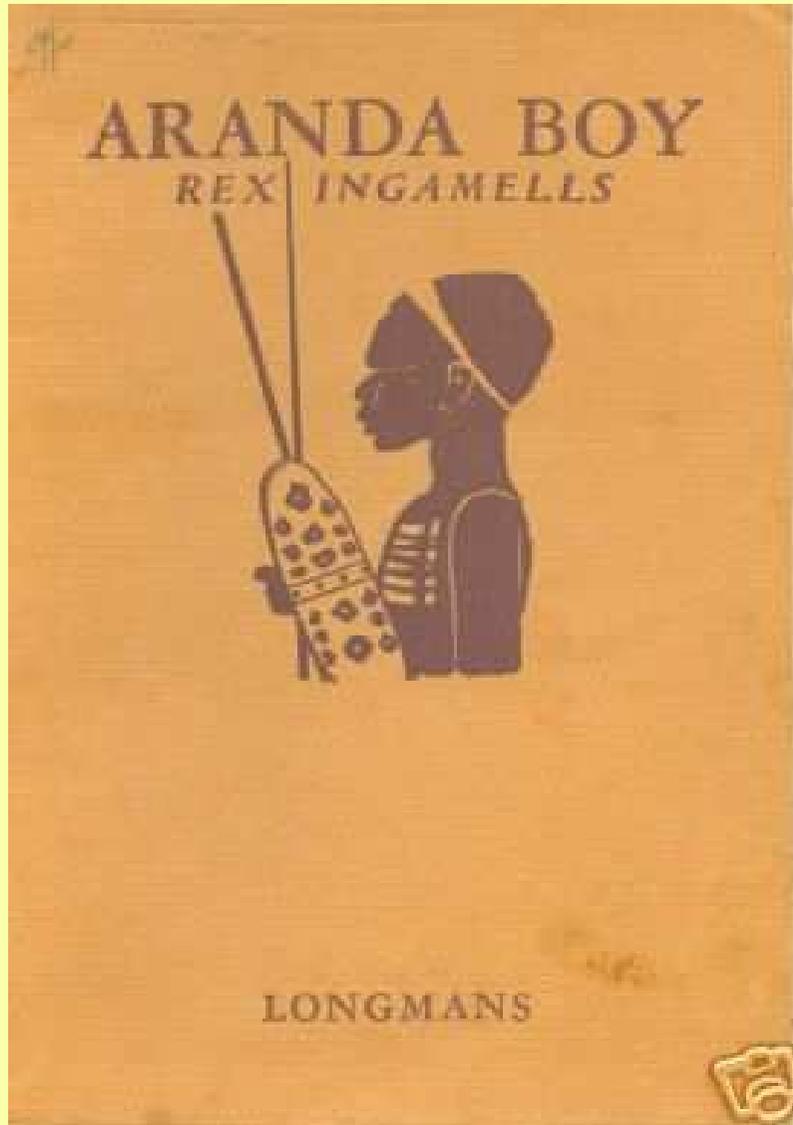
27 September 2007

[jhs@mail.usyd.edu.au](mailto:jhs@mail.usyd.edu.au)

# Note 30/9/07

- This is an edited and corrected version of the powerpoint presented at the ILC, with sources added.
- I compiled the statistical tables from the ABS online data, but they haven't been checked, and the ABS online data is incomplete. So I filled some gaps from the NILS report. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. 2005. National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005: Report submitted to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 255. Canberra.  
[http://www.dcita.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/35637/NILS\\_Report\\_2005.pdf](http://www.dcita.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/35637/NILS_Report_2005.pdf))

# 1952



- Written with advice from T. G. H. Strehlow
- Generally a sympathetic representation of Arrernte people in their first encounters with Europeans.
- BUT.. implication that the intelligent would see the logic of accommodation to Europeans.

**“Era konna angkama,”** laughed Don Byrne,  
standing up and speaking of himself - meaning:  
“He speaks badly.”

Gurra was delighted, and laughed his pleasure to hear Dongberna use the Aranda tongue, although he did not say his words very well. To Gurra it seemed splendid that Dongberna should use the language, which he had heard, other White Men would not do.

**“Era kgnara etalerama,”** said Gurra, with a smile, meaning that Dongberna *thought* a great deal, even if he had difficulty in speaking Aranda.

[Ingamells, Rex 1952. Aranda Boy: An Aboriginal story. London/ Melbourne: Longmans Green. p.99]

# *Taikurendi*

To be together in partnership,  
united

*A word taught by unnamed  
Kaurna people to a German  
missionary, C. G. Teichelmann  
and written down by him in  
1857*

# *taikurendi*

## To be together in partnership

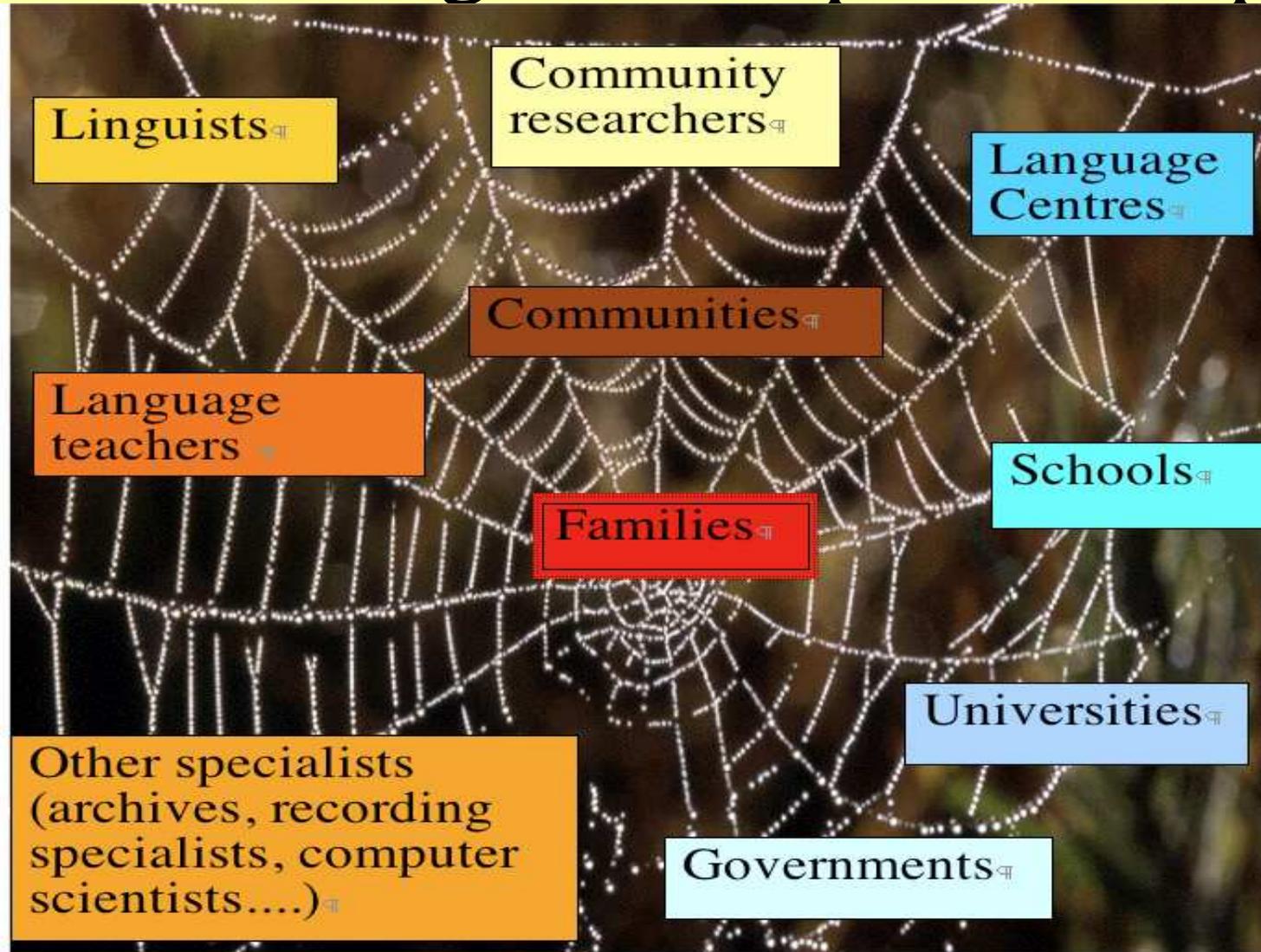


Photo: Ed Austin & Herb Jones; 1987

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/yell/slidefile/arthropods/spiders/Images/11960.jpg>

# Language ecology and social responsibility

“Helping to make Australia a more language-aware society freed of a complacently monolingual mindset is one of the many exciting tasks confronting Australian linguists today.”

Clyne, M. 2006. The social responsibility and impact of the linguist/applied linguist in Australia. In K. Allan (ed.) *Selected papers from the 2005 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society*.  
<http://www.als.asn.au>

# Monolingual mindset?

MR DOWNER: But I mean I don't think in diplomacy the fact that you can speak foreign languages is anything special and obviously he runs the risk of being seen by a lot of Australians as a show-off.

- ...

MR DOWNER: ...there's nothing that unusual about people speaking foreign languages.

- ..

MR DOWNER: Well I mean I don't think it makes any difference to people's lives, personal lives, their living standards, their jobs or anything.

# Myth

- “and we've got Aboriginal schools that actually don't teach literacy. And you say well go to this school and they will learn a language that is spoken by a couple of hundred people rather than learning English which is going to be a survival mechanism for the 21st century.”

*Norman Swan, ABC Health Report 6 August 2007 in an interview with Professor Fiona Stanley.*

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/healthreport/stories/2007/1995728.htm#transcript>

# Fact

- All schools in Australia must teach children English.
- Bilingual schools are a small minority.
- In the Northern Territory
  - 119 schools and 70% of Indigenous students are located outside of Alice Springs and Darwin.
  - 9-10 schools have bilingual programs:

[Source:

[http://www.deet.nt.gov.au/education/programs\\_initiatives/bep/index.shtml](http://www.deet.nt.gov.au/education/programs_initiatives/bep/index.shtml)

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# Enduring Voices

Saving Disappearing Languages

ABOUT THE PROJECT

GLOSSARY

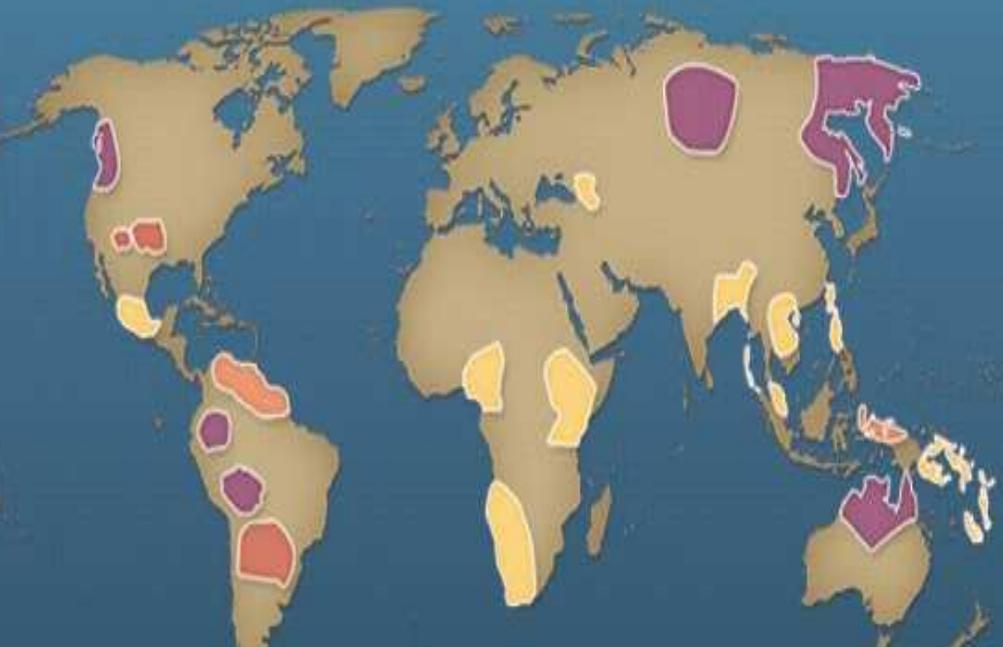
RESOURCES

## Language Hotspots

About every two weeks another language dies, taking millennia of human knowledge and history with it.

Which parts of the world have high numbers of languages in danger of extinction?

EXPLORE THE MAP ▶



<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mission/enduringvoices/>

# Outline of talk

- What's happening in some communities: The Aboriginal Child Language Acquisition project
- Language landscapes: 1996 - 2006: what the Census tells us
- Social landscapes: the likely effects of the Intervention

# ACLA Project

<http://www.linguistics.uni.melb.edu.au/research/projects/ACLA/>

## ***Collaboration with:***

- *Gillian Wigglesworth*, Melbourne University
- *Patrick McConvell*, AIATSIS
- *Jane Simpson*, University of Sydney
- *Samantha Disbray*, *Felicity Meakins* and *Karin Moses*, PhD students, Melbourne University
- *Samantha Smiler*, Kalkaringi, *Betty Nakkamarra Morrison*, Tennant Creek
- *Carmel O'Shannessy*, University of Michigan [completed PhD student at the University of Sydney and the Max Planck Institute, Nijmegen]

- ***Funding:*** ARC, APAC, AIATSIS

Felicity Meakins (Kalkaringi), Betty Morrison  
& Samantha Disbray (Tennant Creek),  
Karin Moses (Yakanarra)



# The child's language landscape

1. what language input do indigenous Australian Aboriginal children receive from
  1. traditional indigenous languages,
  2. Kriol and varieties of English,
  3. code-switching involving these languages as used by adults and older children
2. what effect does this have on the children's language acquisition; how is the input reflected in their production?

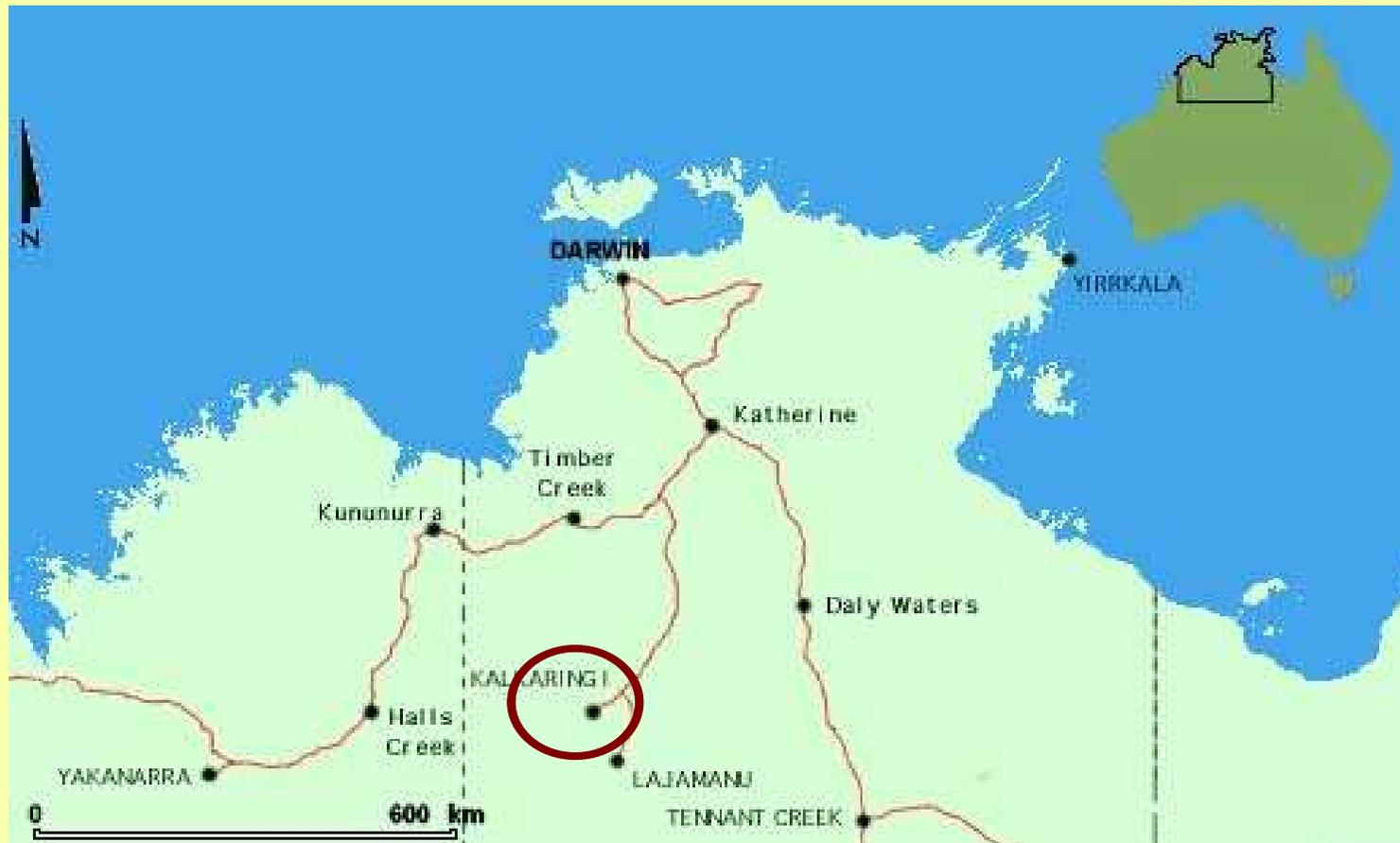
# The project design

- Three communities with one fieldworker in each community
- 6-8 pre-school focus children in each community
- Two six week visits per community per year
- Video data collected over 4 years
- During each visit, data collection includes:
  - four or five sessions with each focus child
  - data from interlocutors at a range of ages
  - structured, semi structured and naturalistic data

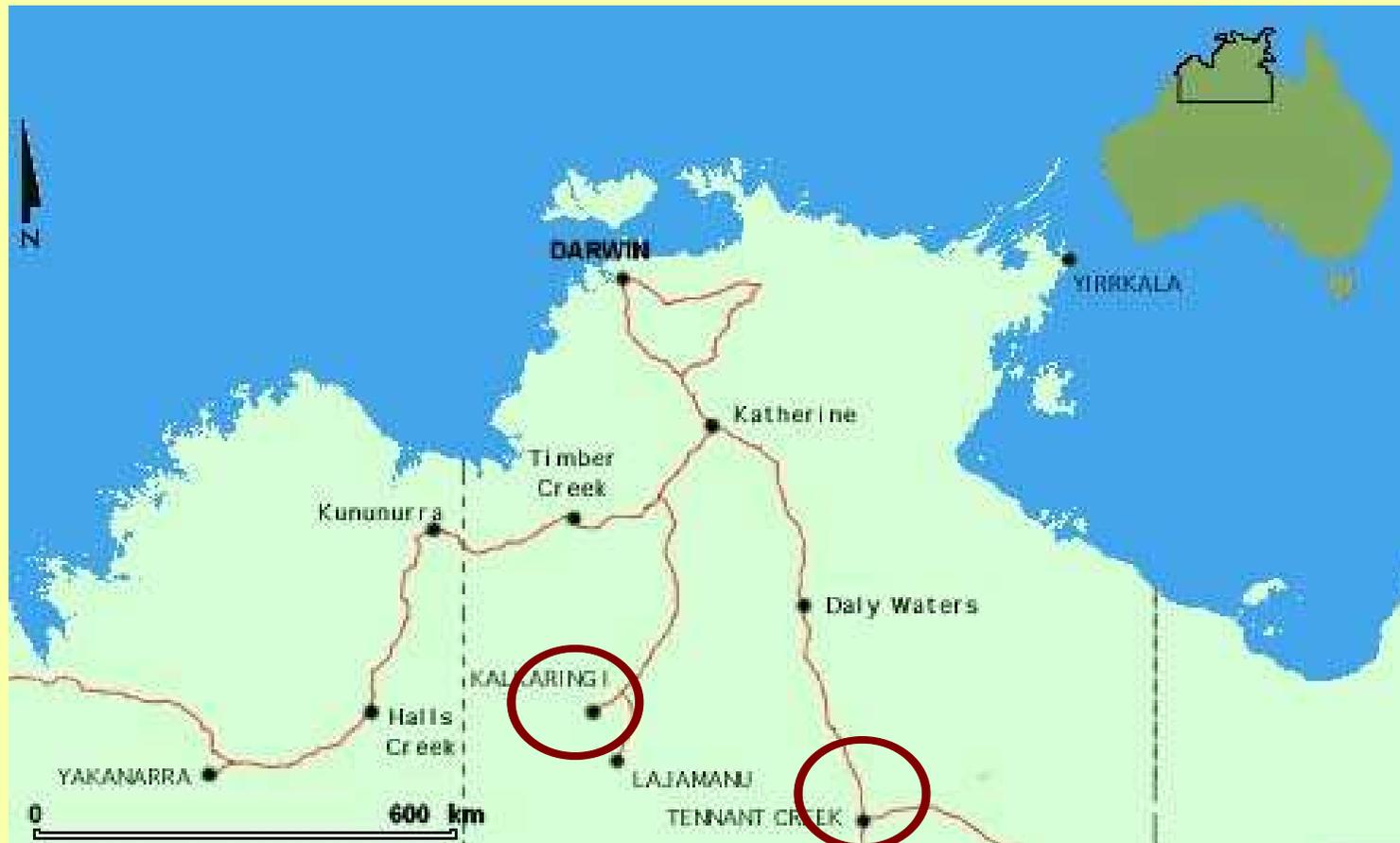
# Communities in the project



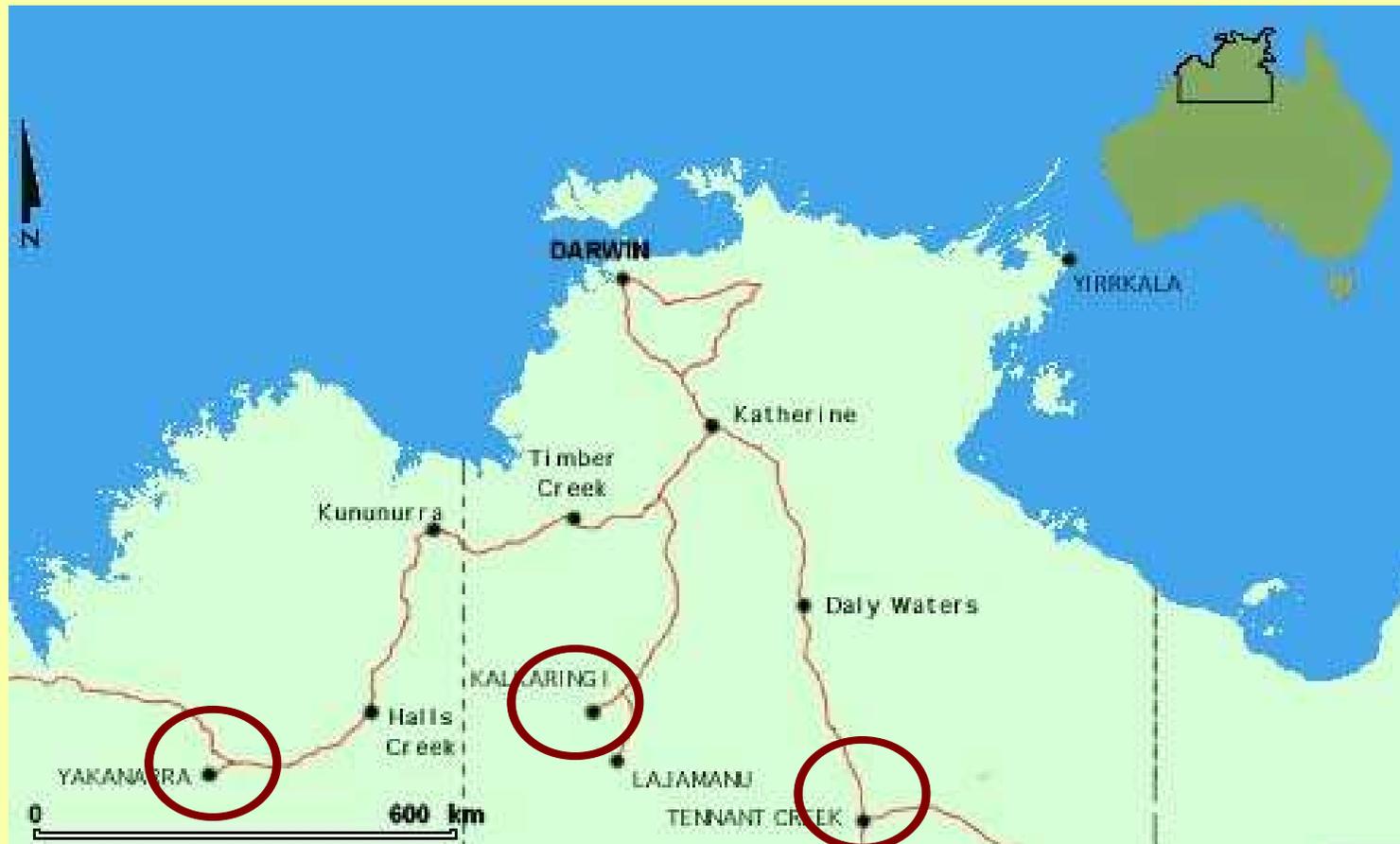
# Communities in the project



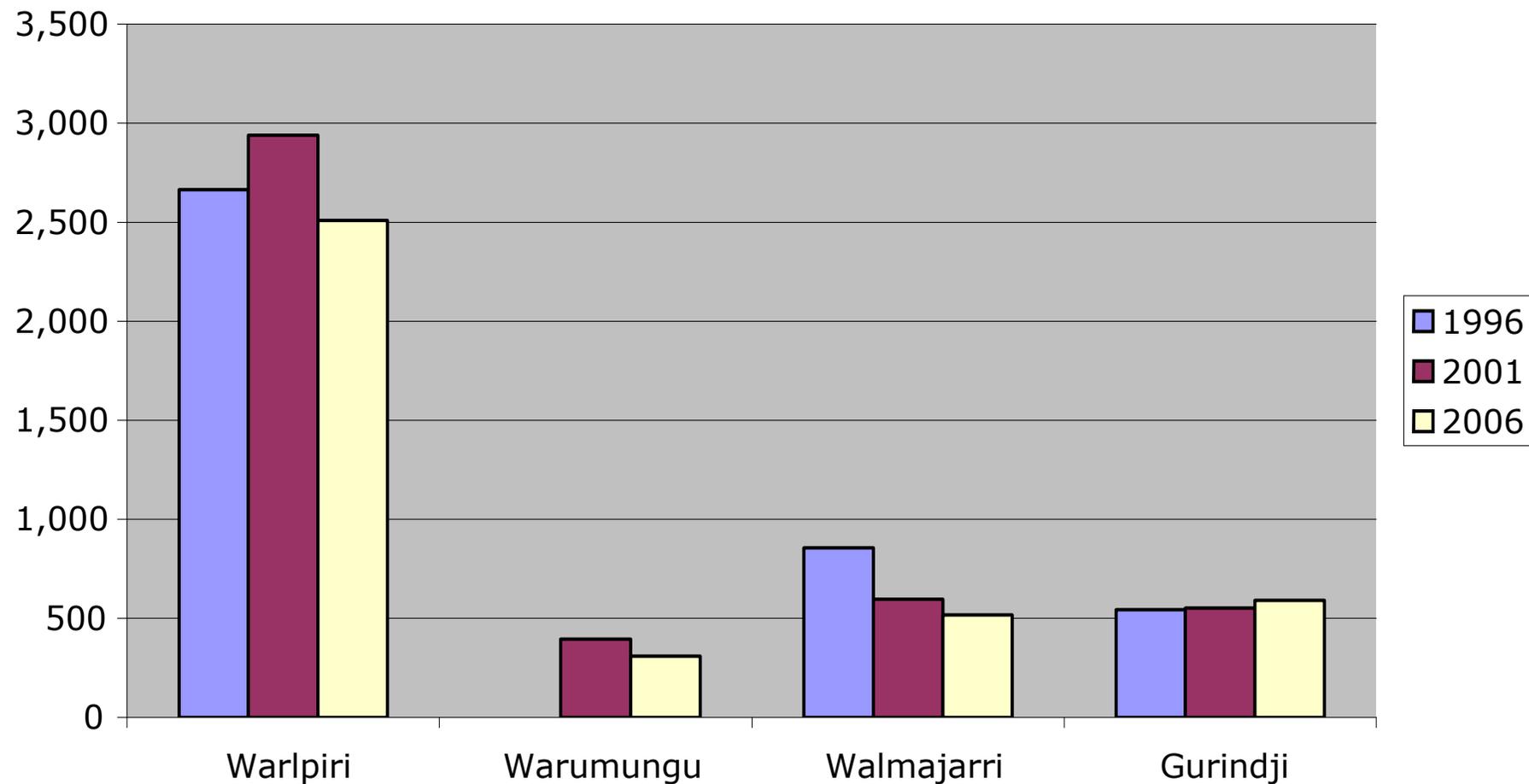
# Communities in the project



# Communities in the project



## Project languages: speaker numbers 1996 - 2006



### Census years

[No figures in 1996 for Warumungu or Kriol. No figures for Gurindji in 1996 or 2001.]

# Data Collection

- Focus group children who were aged between 18 months and 2 at the beginning of the project



# Data Collection

- Video data and transcriptions stored at APAC, ANU
- Each focus child was recorded approximately four times per field trip with various activities which included different levels of control:
  - story book reading ( a number of people reading the same book to the same child)
  - set play situation: e.g. dolls house, cars, toy mobile phones, etc.
  - naturalistic settings, e.g fishing, swimming etc

QuickTime™ and a  
Video decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# The children's family situations

All children had loving caregivers, and a large networks of siblings and cousins who play with them, and take great responsibility for younger children.

- **Kalkaringi:** most common family grouping is family living with grandmother who takes care of the children when mothers are working or studying,
- **Tennant Creek:** children spend time with grandmothers and great grandmothers when the mothers are working or studying.
- **Yakanarra:** no common family grouping; some people live in nuclear families (although there is a lot of interaction between families) and some people live in extended family groups

# Children...

- learn standard **English** at school
- speak varieties ranging from
  - a variety close to **rural non-standard** English
  - varieties of an English-based **creole**. The best known variety (spoken around Katherine, Ngukurr) is called **Kriol**. Other varieties include Barkly Kriol (Barkly Tablelands), and Fitzroy Valley Kriol (Fitzroy Crossing)
  - **mixed languages** probably formed by code-switching an English-based creole with traditional language, e.g. Gurindji Kriol.
- may master a range of varieties along a continuum from **Acrolectal** (close to non-standard English) to **Basilectal Kriol** (hard for standard English speakers to understand).
- Labels like **Wumpurrarni English** (Tennant Creek) may apply to the range of varieties.

# Language input: Lajamanu

Children hear Warlpiri and also the new mixed language Light Warlpiri.

Children normally talk Light Warlpiri, but can talk Warlpiri, and this has been supported by school Warlpiri language programmes

O'Shannessy, C. 2006. *Language contact and children's bilingual acquisition: learning a mixed language and Warlpiri in northern Australia*, Linguistics, University of Sydney: Unpublished PhD thesis.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/2123/1303>

# Kalkaringi [F Meakins FM041.C]

**MO ca 21:** *dat guana garra kom gedim yu baitim yu-mob*

*That goanna's going to come and get you and bite you all*

*i garra kom rarra dijei nyawa kankula.*

*It'll come running this way this one above*

*i garra baitim yu-mob binij*

*It'll really bite you all.*

**CHI ca 4:** *i-l be katurl im inti Mam*

*It'll really bite won't it Mum?*

**MO:** *hmm yu-rra katurl im.*

*Hmm you'll bite it*

**CHI:** *ai-rra katim nyanawu xxx knife-jawung.*

*I'll cut this thing xxx with my knife*

# Gurindi Kriol: a new mixed language

- Auxiliaries from Kriol
- Verbs from Kriol and from Gurindji coverbs
- Nouns from both languages
- Both prepositions and case suffixes found

# Gurindi Kriol: word order

*Pretending to fish.*

\*CHI: bigija **yawu** dij \_mob.

*Biggest lot of fish this.*

\*GRAN: ma garra big \_mob wayi yawu.

*Is there a lot, of fish?*

\*GRAN: ma big \_mob yawu yu mob garram

*A lot of fish you've got*

\*GRAN: big \_mob yu garram yawuyawu wayi?

*A lot you have of fish?*

\*GRAN: yu garram hiya **jarrwa** \_ma.

*You've got here many.*

- FM044

# Gurindi Kriol: word order

- Initial position is important for emphasising information.
- There is considerable variability as to word order.
- For further study - the use of intonation to mark new or salient information as opposed to word order.

# Language input: Kalkaringi

Input directed to children is mostly in Gurindji Kriol, a mixed language.

- children may hear older adults using Gurindji amongst themselves
- input to children is only partially separated in terms of interlocutor, context, etc
- children learn predominantly Gurindji Kriol, and have some understanding of Gurindji
- children's production is only in Gurindji Kriol
- Meakins, F. submitted 2007. *Case marking in contact: The shift in structure and function of the case morphology of Gurindji Kriol*, Linguistics, University of Melbourne, Australia: Unpublished PhD thesis.

# Tennant Creek - Wumpurrarni English

\*ADULT: it no gud fo yu ulkuman,

*It's no good for you, old lady*

- yu **mungku** no gud,

*Your stomach's no good.*

- **wangu mungku** yu gatim.

*Bad stomach you have*

SD104C

# Wumpurrarni English: word order

- Words or phrases which are emphasised may be placed initially in sentences.
- But there is considerable variation

# Language input: Tennant Creek

Input is in varieties of Wumpurrarni English (WE), and/or English, with a little Warumungu and other traditional languages (TIL)

- Children hear some Warumungu and other TILs from older (grandparent age) people talking amongst themselves with a lot of code-switching
- Input to children is only partially separated in terms of interlocutor, context, etc
- Children's production mostly in WE, but can switch (e.g. role-plays) to speaking close to standard English

Morrison, Betty Nakkamarra, and Samantha Disbray, S. 2007. Children talking in Tennant Creek. In Indigenous Languages Conference. Adelaide.

Disbray, Samantha. Thesis in prep. University of Melbourne

# Language input: Yakanarra

Input is largely in Kimberley Kriol and/or English and a limited number of Walmajarri words

- people in Yakanarra are multilingual and shift with varying degrees of facility between the three languages
- language directed to children is determined by situational factors including location, purpose, participants and language skills, and age of the interlocutor
- Children's production is largely in Kriol, but they can switch to English.

Moses, K. in prep., Linguistics, University of Melbourne: PhD thesis.

# Walmajarri:

## 48 most commonly occurring words used at Yakanarra

- Twelve were used by only one speaker
- Only eleven were used by ten or more speakers
- **Animals** 16
- **Bodyparts** 11
- **Environment and plants** 8
- **Humans and spirit world** 4
- **Food and drink** 3
- **Material culture** 2
- **Actions** 2

# Walmajarri:

words used by 10 or more speakers

*girl*

manga

*boy*

parri

*foot*

jina

*hand, arm*

kurrapa

*breast, breast milk,*

ngamarna

*water*

ngapa

*dog*

kunyarr

*horse*

yawarta

*prickle*

kirli

*tree, stick*

mana

*grass*

yuka

# Yakanarra: Kriol

\*MO:ai meik \_im \_bat big yelo yelo keik .

*I'm making a big yellow cake.*

**big yelo keik ai \_l meik \_im.**

*A big yellow cake I'll make.*

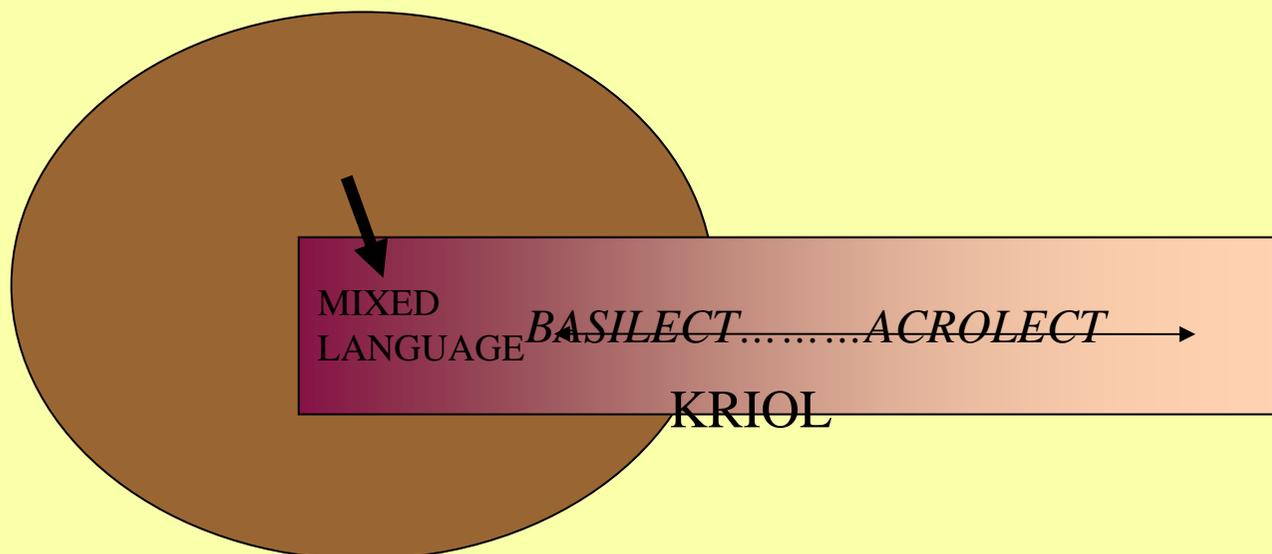
yelo \_wan keik fo ola kid dei angri.

*A yellow cake for all the kids who are hungry.*

KXM 092B

# Summary

- No one talks straight Traditional Language to children
- People use a broad range from mixed language to close to standard English
- Kalkaringi > Tennant Creek > Yakanarra



# Pattern of change

- First, the words for actions and feelings go, along with the auxiliary system
- Then, the case endings go
- Then, the nouns are reduced to those expressing animals, plants, bodyparts..

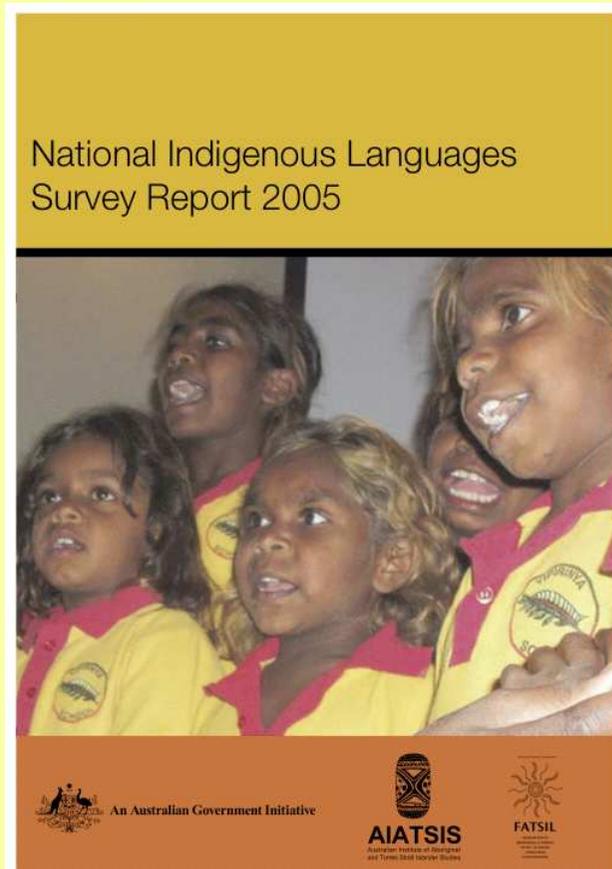
Use of word order for discourse functions remains to some extent.

# **Part 2: Language landscapes: what the Census tells us**

- Census data is used by Governments to determine what services to provide and where.

# The NILS report

[http://www.dcita.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/35637/NILS\\_Repport\\_2005.pdf](http://www.dcita.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/35637/NILS_Repport_2005.pdf)



- Interpreting 1996 and 2001 census data
- Devising an index of language endangerment
- The main source of Australia-wide information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander language situations



# Census data 1996-2006

## languages spoken at home in Australia

	1996 Census	2001 Census	2006 Census
Speaks English only	82% 14,564,924	80% 14,875,072	78.5% 15,581,334
Speaks other language total	2,657,767	2,841,210	3,146,194
Australian Indigenous Languages	48,193	49,899	55,698
Languages spoken at home not stated	530,138	872,026	1,127,760
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,752,829</b>	<b>18,588,308</b>	<b>19,855,288</b>

# Caution on using census data: data collection and coding

- 1. Under- and over-counting because of mobility of Indigenous respondents
- 2. Undercounting of children
- 3. Failure of respondents and administrators to understand the questions

Morphy, F. ed. in prep. *Agency, contingency and census process: observations of the 2006 Indigenous Enumeration Strategy in remote Aboriginal Australia*. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University: Canberra.

- 4. Miscoding of the census data:

e.g. Dha'yi: 1996: **70**, 2001: **3**, 2006: **118**

[2006: 84 *Dari* speakers (Afghanistan/Pakistan) and  
*Thais* speakers listed as Dha'yi (Arnhem Land)]

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/0266B4B1CB4563A6CA25729E0008A883?opendocument>

1996, 2001 figures from NILS report, 2006 figures from Census.

# Interpreting census data

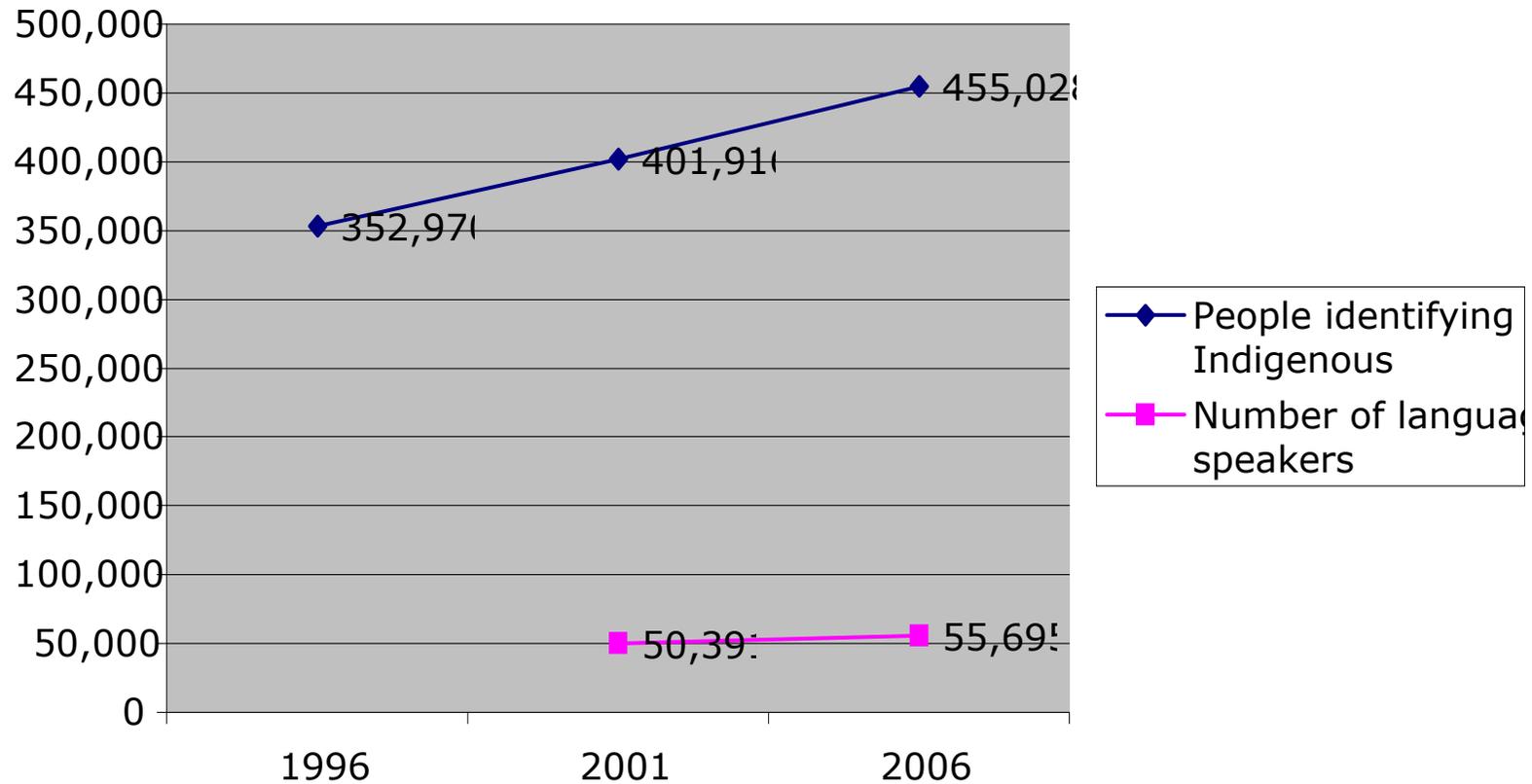
- 1. Differences of names of languages (Yolngu Matha, Djambarrpuyngu, Dhuwaya)
- 2. Differences as to what speaking a language at home means: language of regular communication, versus language of occasional or ceremonial communication versus language which is being relearned
- 3. Willingness to admit speaking a language (Gurindji Kriol: 4 speakers in 2006)

# Interpretation (2)

For languages with small numbers of speakers, the figures are more difficult to interpret.

- 37 people put down Gamilaraay
- 34 people put down Kaurna

## Australian Indigenous population and Indigenous language speakers



**Census**

*Australian Bureau of Statistics*

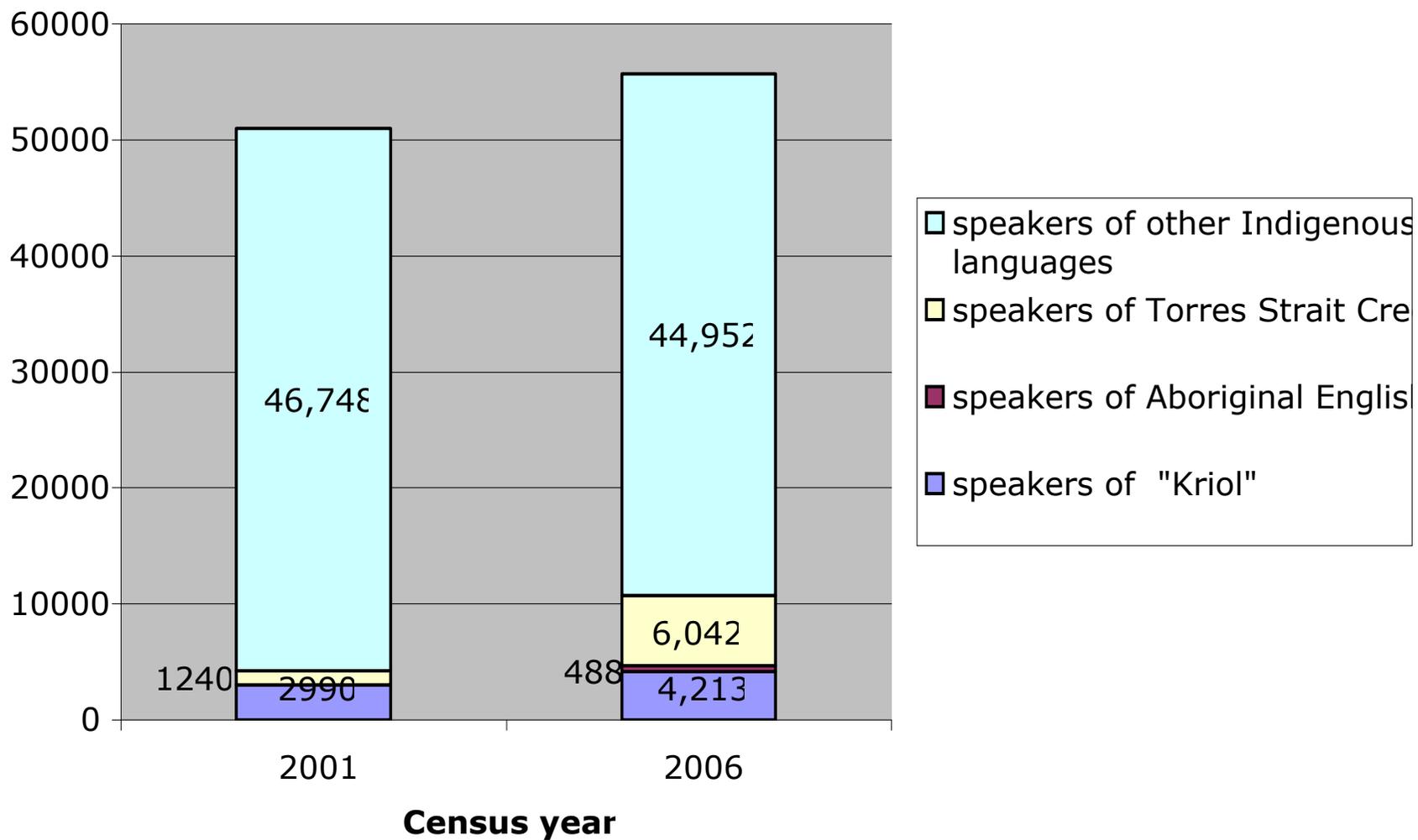
<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/H>

sus

## 2006 Census: People speaking major Indigenous languages (1000+ speakers)

<b><i>Language name</i></b>	<b><i>2006 census</i></b>
Ngaanyatjarra	1,000
Anmatyerri	1,002
Wik Mungkan	1,050
Burarra	1,074
Kalaw Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya	1,216
Anindilyakwa	1,283
Luritja	1,480
Alyawarr	1,664
Tiwi	1,716
Murrinh Patha	1,832
Warlpiri	2,507
Pitjantjatjara	2,657
Djambarrpuyngu	2,766
Arrente	2,835
<b>Kriol</b>	<b>4,213</b>
<b>Aboriginal English</b>	<b>488</b>
<b>Torres Strait Creole</b>	<b>6,042</b>
<b>Total people Indigenous languages</b>	<b>55,695</b>

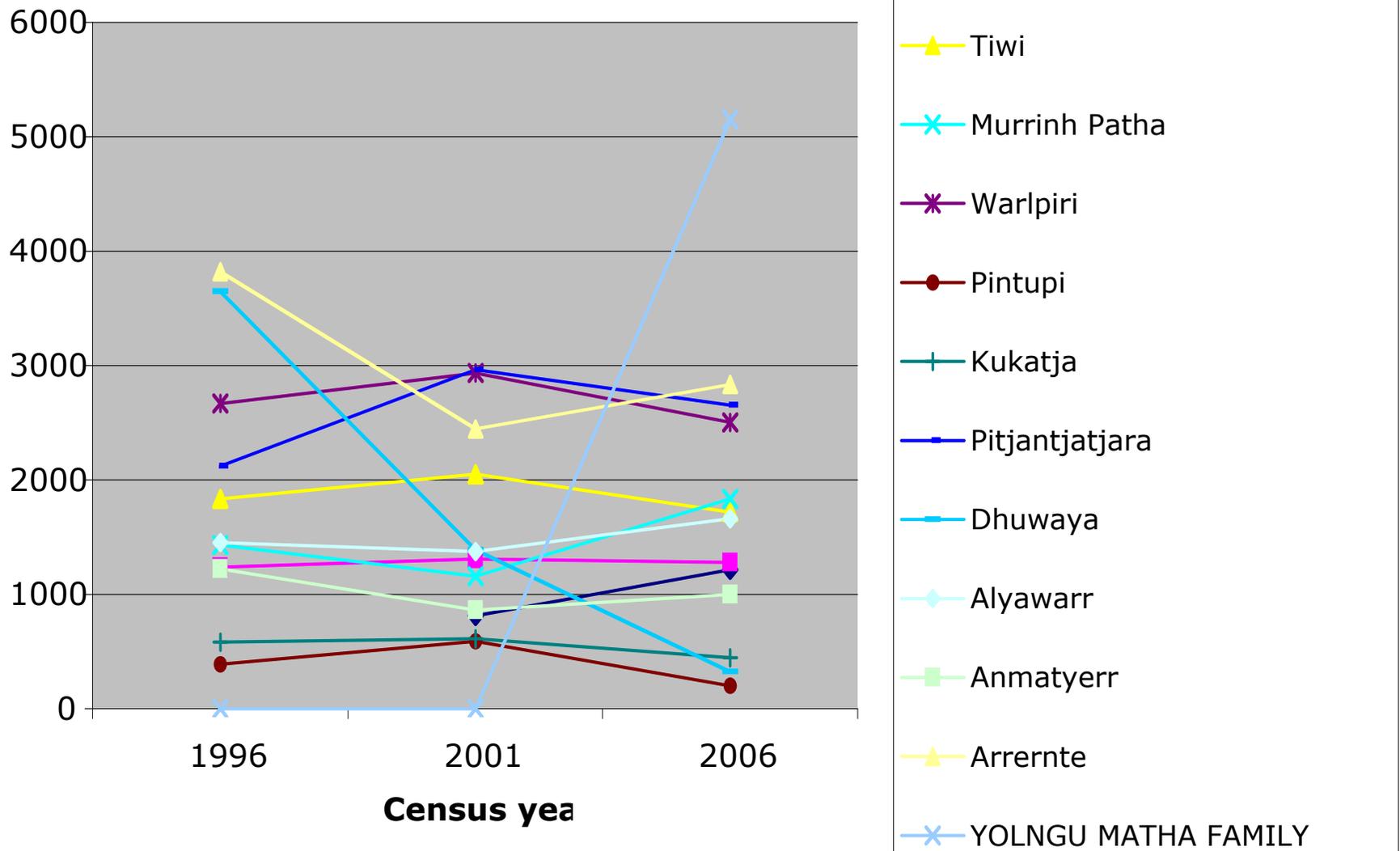
## Proportion of speakers of new and tradit languages 2001 - 2006



2001 figures from NILS report, 2006 figures from Census

Australian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census%20data>

# Major Indigenous langi



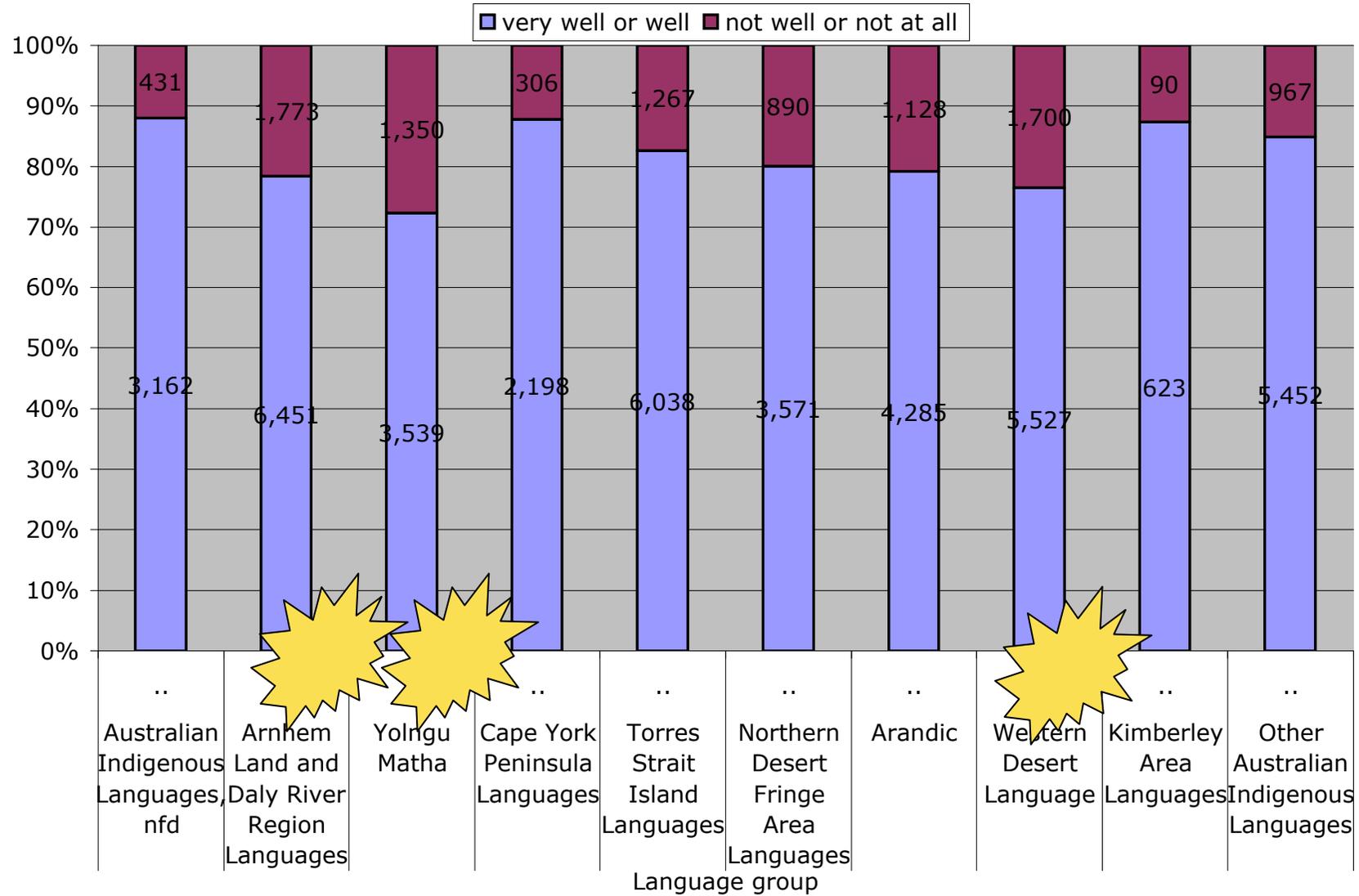
1996, 2001 figures from NILS report, 2006 figures from Census

Australian Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census%20data> AND NILS report

# Points

- 1. The number of speakers of most big languages have remained about the same **or gone down** since 1996, e.g. Tiwi, Warlpiri, Anindilyakwa.
- 2. Of the three big language groups,
  - Arandic languages: Alyawarr has a slight increase. Arrernte, and Anmatyerre **have gone down**,
  - Western Desert languages: Pitjantjatjara has a slight increase. Pintupi and Kukatja **have gone down**.
  - Yolngu Matha group: naming problem renders this hard to tell
- 3. Murrinh Patha and Kalaw Kawaw Ya/Kalaw Lagaw Ya have substantial increases.

English proficiency of Indigenous language speakers



Australian Bureau of Statistics:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/Census%20data2006>

# Lajamanu 2006 Census

Languages of Indigenous people: doesn't include speakers of languages other than English and Australian Indigenous languages

Speakers of Warlpiri	488
Speakers of unidentified Indigenous languages	5
People who speak English only	61 (10%)
Language not stated	57
Total	614

# Lajamanu 2006 Census

## Population distribution

Total Indigenous population	613
People under 15	214 (35%)
People under 15: Range of year cohorts	Min. in year: 5 Max. in year: 20

# Points

- The numbers of speakers for languages are all small, but other evidence from community members and linguists suggests that there is a core of people still speaking these languages as a first language, and almost all have a solid number of children speaking them (NILS Report 2005).
- The new languages of Kriol, Torres Strait Broken and others have proportionally a large number of speakers.
- In small multilingual societies events which would not affect larger communities may have disproportionately large effects. Good or bad.

# Percentage of population under 15

[excluding those who made no comment on Indigenous status]

!!likely undercount of children in remote communities (Morphy in prep.)

	<b>Australia</b>		<b>Northern Territory</b>	
	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
1996	40%	21%	38%	29%
2001	40%	20%	36%	22%
2006	38%	19%	35%	20%

# Lajamanu 2006 Census

## Population distribution

Total Indigenous population	613
People under 15	214 (35%)
People under 15: Range of year cohorts	Min. in year: 5 Max. in year: 20
Lajamanu people 15-24 who have given birth	82 (39% of total mothers)
N.T. people 15-24 who have given birth	14,189 (20% of total mothers)

# Points

- 1. For the last ten years a large proportion of the Indigenous population have been language learners.
- 2. Many mothers are young.
- 3. Many of the 5-10 year olds in 1996 are now parents.
- 4. Possible brake : if the primary caregiver is actually the grandmother.
- 5. BUT.. Poor health leads to early deaths.
- 6. If language shift takes hold among children, the spread to the next generation can be very rapid.

# **Social landscapes: the likely effects of the Intervention**

We live in a welfare state.

We live in an occupied country.

Lorraine Injie, Indigenous Languages  
Conference, Adelaide 25/9/07

## *Now*

## *After the Intervention*

Poverty and lack of jobs	Unclear - no CDEP jobs but some jobs to be created. Welfare quarantining to reduce choice in spending
Many children not attending school	Parents punished if children don't attend school.
Poor health and constant mourning from untimely deaths	? More fly-in-fly-out doctors
High mobility: less employed people spend more time travelling. Sorry business and family violence contribute.	Mobility probably reduced due to welfare quarantining.
Overcrowded houses	More houses to be built.
Considerable violence.	Possibly reduced if police presence is substantially increased.
More Aboriginal people and organisations running parts of Aboriginal communities	More control by Government managers and Centrelink staff.
Aborigines and non-Aborigines lead overlapping but separate lives.	?

# Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle “Little Children are Sacred”

*In our Law children are very sacred because they carry the  
two spring wells of water from our country within them*



Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the  
Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse

2007



# Some recommendations from the Wild-Anderson report

- **Education**

54. That DEET urgently implements the outcomes of the *Indigenous Languages and Culture Report*.

- **Community education and awareness and  
Implementation of report**

57f, 93 Using Indigenous languages to get messages across

- **Cross-cultural practice**

91. Cross-cultural training for all government personnel

b. training in Aboriginal language concepts for teachers in remote schools

92. Encourage government personnel to undertake relevant language training

# Instead...

- Abolition of CDEP and so reducing income and services for communities
- Quarantining half the income of welfare recipients
- Quarantining all the income of welfare recipients whose children don't go to school
- Nearly \$500 million to be spent on 725 new bureaucrats to administer all this.

# Likely effect of Intervention on language maintenance

- **Short-term:**
  - Loss of CDEP jobs at Language Centres and Art Centres
  - Reduced mobility means more children at school
- **Long-term:** income quarantining and control, and loss of services, will put pressure on people to get jobs which probably means moving to towns
- Unlikely to have bilingual programs in towns

# Raising children

- **Children's independence is valued, and so parents accede to children's requests.**
- **Force rarely used by parents against children.**
- **Children take responsibility for younger children.**

## Anbarra

Hamilton, A. 1981. Nature and nurture : Aboriginal child-rearing in north-central Arnhem Land: AIAS new series ; no. 20. Canberra:

Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies ■

## Pitjantjatjara

Hamilton, A. 1982. Child health and child care in a desert community 1970-71. In J. Reid (ed.) Body, land and spirit : health and healing in Aboriginal society, (pp. 48-71). St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland

Press ■

## Ngaanyatjarra

Shaw, G. 2002. An ethnographic exploration of the development in child rearing style among the Ngaanyatjarra people from the pre-contact era to the present, Public Health, University of New South Wales: Unpublished

Masters thesis ■

- **Children's independence is valued.**

BUT.. doesn't work in a place with limited access to nutritious food that doesn't need cooking.

AND.. Respecting autonomy means that parents may not have control over whether children go to school.

Or of what language they speak

- **Children take responsibility for younger children.**

BUT.. can lead to inappropriate peer pressure and rejection of school

And can lead to strong peer pressure as to what language to speak

*The Intervention targets parents, making them responsible for what children do, but does not address the basic conflict in values involved. There is a stick but no carrot.*

# *taikurendi*

## To be together in partnership

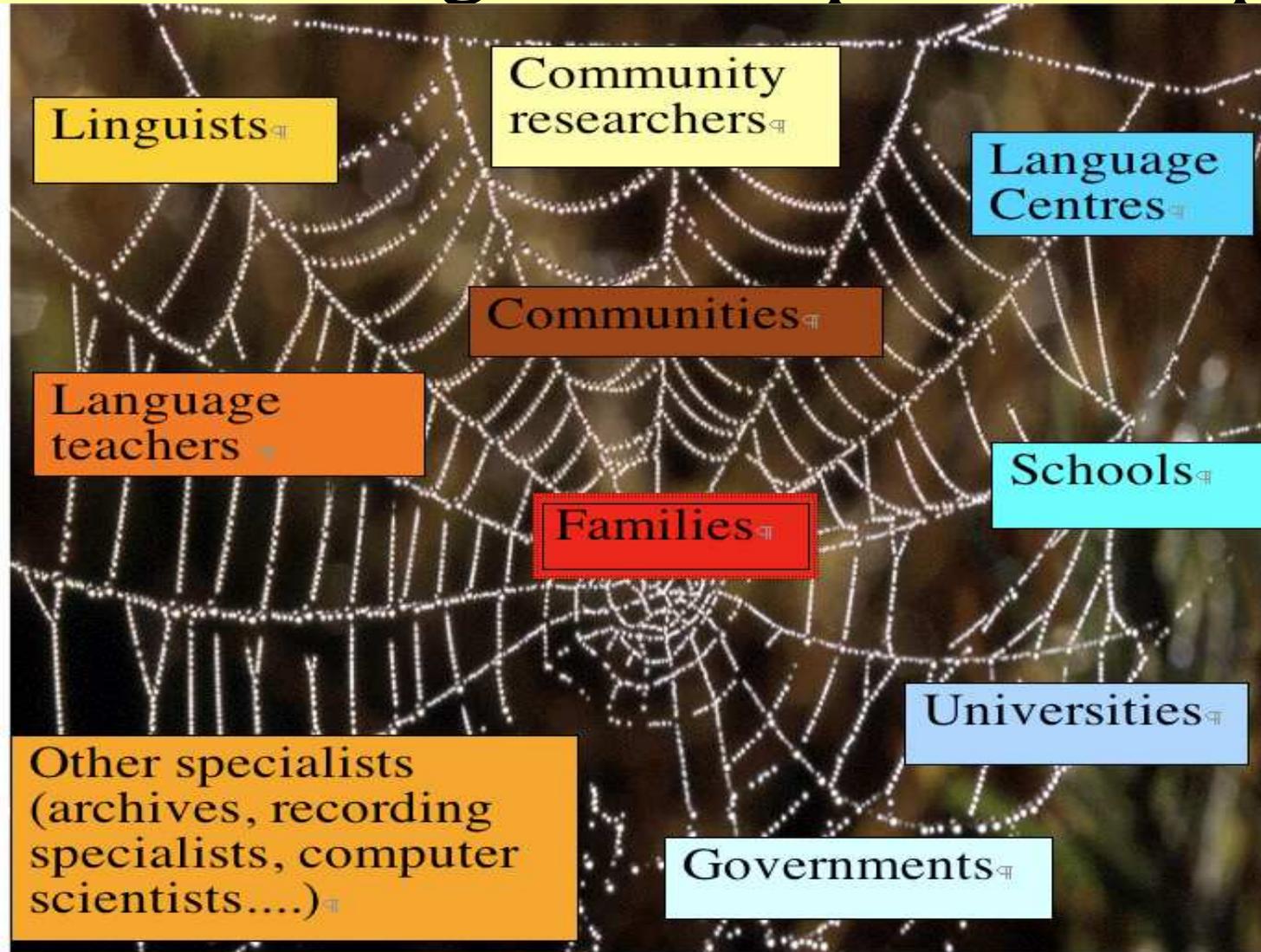


Photo: Ed Austin & Herb Jones; 1987

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/yell/slidefile/arthropods/spiders/Images/11960.jpg>

*Ngaityo taikurtiattaalya!*

**My dear relatives!**

Modelled on:

*Ngaityo yungaandalya!* My brother!

Expression of gratitude - 'I thank  
you' (Teichelmann and Schürmann 1840)

Jane Simpson, [jhs@mail.usyd.edu.au](mailto:jhs@mail.usyd.edu.au)