

# Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest – September 8 meeting notes

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## Welcome to Country

**Meeting opened at 10:15am.** Aunty Irene Harrington Welcomed people to Country in Bundjalung Language.

## Acknowledgements/Introduction

Desmond Barton acknowledged Country, and payed respects to Elders past and present before noting housekeeping items.

Raymond Ingrey, Manager Languages Cultures Communities Department of Education was noted as an apology due to sorry business.

It was noted that when the Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest was first launched the Minister was here and it was a big event. However post the launch there has been a bit of a standstill and a lack of guidance around how schools would implement effective language programs, who would/should teach language and how community might be guiding and directing language learning.

It was also noted that the NSW AECG has recently been contracted to support progressing Language and Culture Nests across the state. The initial step the NSW AECG has taken is to visit each Nest to see what the needs are and what has been happening.

## Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest Update

Glen Rhodes provided an update on the Bundjalung Language + Culture Nest noting that:

- There are currently five public schools engaged in language programs – Baryulgal; Brunswick Heads; Ballina; Cabbage Tree Island; and Casino
- Within the 5 schools that have language programs there are a total of 4 language tutors employed – the language tutors hours of work vary, some working 3 hours some 6 hours
- All schools that have become involved in implementing language programs have engaged quite well within their community
- Considering the large size of the Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest there are very few language teachers or tutors – Glen works closely with Gnibi Elders, working the best way they can with the shortage of human resources on the ground

## Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest Open Group Discussion

After Glen's update an open group discussion began and was facilitated by Shayne Williams. The following discussion points were made:

## Staffing

- There has not been the staffing resources to effectively service the communities who have signed up to the Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest– there was supposed to be a community person who would act in a coordinator role to engage and work with the Bundjalung Nest communities – this position has not been organised over two years and we need to move quicker on this
- Unfortunately there are very few fluent language speakers within the Bundjalung nation – the speakers we do have don't want to be paid \$36 an hour through the model setup by industrial relations and DoE, the highest rate of the scale is around \$43 per hour – it is embarrassing to ask Elders to come in for this for one hour
- Participants noted that on Bundjalung Country a person could: be employed to work directly with community/work closely with language keepers and develop resources in community and then bring back/share these resources if community agrees; work closely with the Language and Culture teacher to support additional education and training opportunities; must be a community person; could be based in Lismore; should be employed asap; could organise community based language learning classes; include a car for travel purposes; not be attached to an institution that will restrict them in access to community and other necessary commitments
- To minimise travel and related logistical issues developing an opportunity for two project officers/coordinators to be employed (one in north Bundjalung, one in south) may be best
- In regards to developing resources, a lot of time and effort for both Elders and those sitting with them goes into sitting for hours teasing out language for resources – are there funds to pay for both the community person and the Elder?
- Glen' role as Language and Culture teacher is a Department of Education position which is mainly around managing the tutors
- There is a need for more tutors to be employed across the Bundjalung Nation – four tutors is not enough for a region which includes more than 120 schools
- A difficulty for schools to find the tutors was identified– there are a lot of people sitting waiting to find out what the processes are around tutors and training – people are particularly interested in understanding how recognition of prior learning will work
- There is a need for better coordination and communications around school's delivery of language and culture teaching and learning programs

## Governance

- At the State level the Language and Culture Nests are governed by a Steering Committee which includes Michele Hall, Cindy Berwick and Mary Senj
- In order to govern the Bundjalung Language and Culture Nest it would be a good idea to organise a Reference Group which is representative and includes Elders, community members, Local AECG representatives, the Language and Culture Teacher, tutors and the Principal from the Language and Culture base school
- A broad terms of reference has been drafted for Connected Communities schools which could be adapted for the Bundjalung Language and Culture Reference Group
- There will need to be some clarifications set around whether Elders can be funded to attend Reference Group meetings – this could be something for the Department and NSW AECG to

consider and respond to – the regional AECG could possibly provide support through invoicing the Department

- There will also need to be clarifications provided around release of school staff to attend reference group meetings
- If there is to be a project officer/coordinator person employed then that person could assist with administration and other work to support the reference group
- A broad range of community members attending the meeting, along with others who were not able to be present at the meeting, were nominated to form an interim Bundjalung Language and Culture Reference Group – It was agreed that Nita Roberts, Regional AECG President, would Chair the Reference Group
- The following list includes many but not all of those who were nominated and/or accepted – Note that this list is not final.

Uncle Charles, Auntie Irene, Nita Roberts (Chair), Glen Rhodes, Uncle Roger Duroux, Lynette Donnelly, the regional AECG were to follow up on two potential members from Mid Richmond, Lower Clarence, Mollymook, Tabulum Banalbo, Adrian Harrington, Arlene Roberts, Shane Caldwell and Auntie Carmel, Tanya Marlow, Ricky Cook, Deb cook, Emmanuel Roberts – Troy – Liz Parry – Tara Gordon – Eli Cook – Kris Cook – Shaun Davies - Sheldon and James Harrington – Christie Lee Bucanna and Teearn Bolt/Parker – Cherie Leon – Mitch King – Bianca Monaghan, Auntie Annabel Walker, Dean Loadsman

It was noted that it is important that young people attend meetings and contribute to the reference group to learn about culture, language and the work that is happening – many young people present nominated to stay involved and attend reference group meetings

- Byron/Brunswick representatives were an apology today but they wish to be kept informed and on the Reference Group
- The first meeting of the reference group was confirmed for Friday September 16 at NORPA

### **Funding and sustainability**

- A need was identified for guidelines around existing funding and how it can be spent within schools – there is funding that came with the Nest two years ago that sits in the base school – this funding has been there since the launch – community people and also department people were unsure of the process for allocation of those funds and there was an expectation that the coordinator person would explain so there is funding but no clarity on how that goes
- There are concerns that the Language Nest has been ‘setup to fail’ – two years have passed and there has been little clarity provided on how the Nest will be coordinated – now if funding of the nest stops in 2017 there will be little to show and the blame will be laid on the community yet again...
- TAFE have been keen to train community members in Bundjalung language Cert I, II and IIIs but community has identified the need for Recognition of Prior Learning, particularly in regards to Elders who have language – the issues around issuing recognised prior learning for Elders to become recognised as tutors have taken a considerable amount of time to resolve– there is a real need to work these issues out so that there is increased capacity for teaching and learning in schools across the Bundjalung Nest
- Tutors are paid small wages – there is not a great incentive there
- Currently there are two different buckets of funding – one that sits in the base school primarily for the employment of tutors across the Nest – then there’s money the NSW AECG have been

recently contracted (last three months) to support progressing the Language and Culture Nests and is primarily for progressing the Nest based on identified priorities – both funding buckets have been provided to the end of 2017

- There is a real need to start working on long term funding and sustainability planning for the Bundjalung Nest
- Aboriginal Affairs also has the 'Our languages our way' grant funding program which may be worth looking into

### **Training and development opportunities**

- Elders have been asked to do TAFE Certificates in Bundjalung language but this was offensive – Elders have learnt the language and do not want to be belittled by being asked to learn things they already know
- We have been fighting for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for our Elders for 2 years now – having Elders being blocked from contributing in schools because they don't have their Cert I or II is reducing the capacity to achieve the objectives of the Language and Culture Nest
- TAFE are currently in the process of getting RPLs for 15 people
- In regards to running a Certificate II course in Bundjalung Language it was noted that it is difficult to deliver a course in language that has not been delivered before because there are not experienced folk ready to go and deliver

### **Additional points to consider**

- The Nest concept originally emerged from NZ and in Hawaii their language was on the verge of extinction – they have the preschools program going and are now building back to fluency – In NSW we are trying to apply the Nest concept to also cover primary secondary and adult education so it is a much bigger concept
- The idea that one way of teaching is better than another and you need a TAFE Cert to teach effectively is narrow minded – the concept of immersion language learning is scientifically proven and our Elders can do this
- In Hawaii it is all immersion – books, signs etc around the school are all in language – however this approach can fall down if immersion is done in primary and then stopped in secondary
- The commitment of the people at the meeting shows the strength and potential for the Bundjalung Nest - funding is being shifted so real engagements can happen now to progress things from the community's perspective
- Another strength is we have achieved a lot of ground work and there are resources sitting at Gnibi College – those resources are at Gunellabah School