

CHAPTER 5

LITERACY AND LANGUAGE

5.1 Literacy is a central issue in Indigenous education. Overall levels of literacy among the Indigenous population remain well below those of other Australians. Literacy and numeracy skills were identified as crucial preconditions for achievement across all learning areas in the MCEETYA National Strategy. Priority five of the Strategy endorsed the call made in the 1994 National Review for ‘a concentrated effort and a major investment in literacy development by the Commonwealth and the education providers’. The Strategy called for the provision of ESL or English language acquisition programs and teaching strategies, particularly in the early years of education. The Strategy also called for the recognition of Indigenous languages as the foundation on which to acquire ‘knowledge and understanding of the English language in all its forms’.¹ Priority seven of the Strategy recognised the important role in community development of adult literacy and numeracy training, and called for increased availability of community based literacy programs.²

5.2 Much of the preceding discussion has touched on issues of language and literacy. This is hardly surprising given their primacy in all levels of education. The National Schools English Literacy Survey conducted in 1996 showed Indigenous students performing at lower levels of literacy than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Data from the 1996 Census also showed generally lower levels of spoken English proficiency among the Indigenous population.³ Lack of fundamental English literacy skills has profound effects on further educational participation and achievement and was a source of major concern for many witnesses in the inquiry. As the recent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory commented, ‘The wider options provided by better skills in literacy and numeracy are simply not available when Indigenous people want to exercise them’. The most significant effect was felt in relation to employment.

For example, basic literacy and numeracy is a necessity for employment in the mining industry, which has a preferential employment program and is actively seeking to increase the number of Indigenous mining employees by providing cadetships and workplace tuition in numeracy and literacy. It has found that ‘most potential employees from communities could not read occupational health and safety documents, or even signs around the

1 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996-2002*, Canberra, 1996, p. 51

2 *ibid.*, pp. 71-73

3 M. Gray, B. Hunter and R. G. Schwab, *A critical survey of Indigenous education outcomes, 1986-96*, CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 170/1998, Canberra, 1998, p. 14

minesite. They cannot fill in the application forms, write their date of birth or tally numbers as is required for many jobs'.⁴

5.3 Much of the evidence in the inquiry dealt with the needs of rural and remote locations. Literacy levels were generally thought to be higher in urban areas, and Census data confirmed this. Over 90 per cent of Indigenous people in major urban areas (100,000 people or more) spoke English at home. This was a higher proportion than among the non-Indigenous population, but may also mask differences in written literacy.⁵

5.4 The language and literacy needs of Indigenous communities vary widely. This can be seen in the language background of Indigenous peoples. The 1996 Census found that English was spoken at home by 80 per cent of Indigenous people. About 13 per cent spoke an Indigenous language at home. In the Northern Territory, however, 61 per cent of Indigenous people spoke an Indigenous language at home while in New South Wales less than one per cent spoke an Indigenous language at home. Just over one quarter of all people speaking an Indigenous language reported that they spoke English either not well or not at all.⁶

5.5 The Committee heard some evidence of a decline in literacy levels in some remote communities. This was purely anecdotal and hard to verify but was repeated by a number of witnesses. Contributing factors were said to include poor school attendance, health problems such as otitis media, and the lack of sufficient ESL trained teaching staff for Indigenous students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

5.6 There appears to be little evidence to support perceptions of a decline in literacy levels among the Indigenous population. Studies by both ACER and CAEPR suggest that, if anything, there has been a slight increase in literacy levels.⁷ However, these levels remain low in comparison to the non-Indigenous population. Many of the anecdotal comments also related to remote areas, and they may be valid perceptions in some of these areas.

Issues and approaches in the literacy debate

5.7 Literacy is by far the most pressing issue in Indigenous education. Other concerns noted by the Committee, including health, social and family dislocation, low attendance rates and poorly trained teachers, are components of a wider pattern of factors resulting in poor literacy outcomes. Issues of pedagogy also appear as

4 Northern Territory Department of Education, *Learning Lessons: An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory*, Darwin, 1999, p. 18

5 *ibid.*, p. 82

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *1996 Census of Population and Housing: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, cat. no. 2034.0, Canberra, 1998, p. 85

7 *Reading Comprehension and Numeracy among Junior Secondary School Students in Australia*, Australian Council for Educational Research, pp. 8-9

relatively minor in overall considerations of educational outcomes, except to the extent that they affect literacy achievement.

5.8 The extent of the literacy problem becomes most apparent in its effects on employment. Consideration of the role of education for employment received only limited attention in submissions and in statements made at public hearings and inspections. The Committee is concerned that a preoccupation with teaching strategies, culturally relevant curricula and other elements of classroom practice – important as these are – should not be allowed to outweigh a consideration of the principal goal of schooling, which is the inculcation of life skills, including proficiency in literacy and numeracy. The Committee is aware of varying debates over the most appropriate ways to teach these skills, but is concerned that these debates should be regarded as subordinate to the central goals of schooling.

5.9 The issue of literacy is perhaps the main issue of contention in the continuing debate over the appropriate curriculum for Indigenous children. There is general agreement in the considerable body of commentary and research literature that an homogenous program will work no better for Indigenous students than it will for other students. A high proportion of Indigenous students speak standard English and share their classrooms with fluent English speakers, but many Indigenous students speak non-standard forms of English or Indigenous languages. Communities vary greatly and this diversity needs to be reflected in approaches to literacy.

Declining English literacy?

5.10 Perceptions of a decline in English language and literacy outcomes among Indigenous school children have been well documented over recent years. A study undertaken by the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia in 1995 reported anecdotal information from experienced teachers in remote community schools supporting these perceptions. The causes of this decline were various.

5.11 One comment referred to the paucity of content in many of the lessons provided. Another referred to the easier access to money and the resultant distraction from schoolwork. There was another, more obvious, reason provided by a steady decline in school attendance, which was not so rigidly enforced as it once was. Other comments referred to the greater numbers of experienced teachers in remote area schools in earlier times. As the report summed up, the decline in literacy appeared to have its roots in social and economic changes in communities over the past ten years, as well as changes in teaching methods and community perceptions of the value of schooling.⁸

5.12 Linguists and educators interviewed for the NLLIA report who perceived a decline in English language and literacy learning in remote Central Australian schools attributed this to three sets of interrelated changes:

8 NLLIA, *Desert Schools*, vol.2, Canberra, 1996, pp. 64-65

- changes in the historical circumstances and social environment of schools, from an earlier period of greater external control where, nevertheless, there may sometimes have been a closer relationship between teachers, students and their families, and more acceptance by students of regular attendance and engagement with learning;
- dramatic social and economic changes which have occurred in communities over the past ten to twenty years, leading to shifts in community perceptions of the value of schooling in relation to jobs and income; and
- changes in English teaching methods at the same time as there has been an increasing preponderance of inexperienced teachers with short lengths of stay in community schools, and sometimes unsatisfactory staffing ratios in those schools.⁹

5.13 Recent evidence of a decline in literacy achievement among Indigenous students in some communities comes from *Learning Lessons*, the independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory. It cites a report of interviews with the Kardu Numida Town Council in which they assess the literacy and numeracy levels of people in different age cohorts.¹⁰ Their verdict is as follows:

40-60 years of age – good literacy skills, fair numeracy skills

25-40 years of age – poor literacy and numeracy skills

Under 25 years of age – nil numeracy and literacy skills

5.14 As noted earlier, these perceptions, while likely to be accurate in those parts of the Northern Territory referred to, are not reflected in national data showing a slight improvement in overall levels of literacy.

5.15 The concern of Indigenous people for the teaching of English to a high level of proficiency is long-standing. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs reported in its inquiry into Indigenous languages in 1992 that virtually all the people it spoke to were adamant that they wanted their children to gain high levels of competence in standard English. This was necessary for equal access to services and employment. It meant that Indigenous people were less dependent on the wider community. The caveat was that such proficiency should not be gained at the expense of community languages.¹¹

9 *ibid.*, p. 139

10 Northern Territory Department of Education, *Learning Lessons: An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory*, Darwin, 1999, p. 117

11 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Language and Culture – A Matter of Survival: Report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maintenance*, Canberra, 1992, p. 34

5.16 Access to and participation in preschool education was seen as vital in a number of locations. Staff from the Geraldton Aboriginal Education Centre pointed to the success of the Indigenous preschool in assisting Indigenous children at an early age. Preschool students were found to settle into school more easily and quickly, and were said to acquire skills that other children did not have in the early years of schooling. The District Education Office had identified early childhood education as a priority issue, and were doing a stocktake of children who did not attend preschool or kindergarten. The Committee notes the continuing relevance of one of the findings of a 1995 House of Representatives Select Committee inquiry:

the major advantage of pre-school education is its potential to foster in Aboriginal children the emergence of educational and other skills that will enhance the probability of their success in subsequent stages of schooling.¹²

5.17 In *100 Children go to School* a group of researchers examined literacy development in the year prior to school and the first year of school among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. The research included twenty case studies of individual children. Preschool experiences played a significant role in literacy development among these children. The research pointed to the importance of cultural factors and the home environment, and called for closer links between preschools and schools.

This research points to the need for the preschool teacher to be placed more centrally with regard to literacy learning in the early childhood years in that much of their accumulated knowledge of children and their families could be utilised in the transition process.¹³

5.18 Commonwealth financial support was being used in a number of locations to provide access to affordable, culturally appropriate preschool education for Indigenous children. Examples included the Meekaway Preschool in Geraldton and the Gainmara Birrilee Preschool in Brewarrina. Access was much more limited for children in remote locations where the need was greatest. A mobile preschool operated in the Brewarrina region but this was able to provide only one session a fortnight in each location in comparison to the five sessions a week available in town.¹⁴

5.19 A number of locations commented on successful strategies they had employed to raise levels of literacy among Indigenous students. Some of these focussed on mainstream programs, although an emphasis on intensive assistance also seemed to be important. Reading Recovery was one program mentioned by the principal of Bourke High School that had produced good results with Indigenous students.

12 Australia, House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education Report, Canberra, 1985, p 85

13 Susan Hill et. al., *100 Children go to School*, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra, 1998, p. 12

14 Miss Natalie Fazldeen, *Hansard*, Brewarrina, 26 July 1999, p. 43

5.20 While there was a feeling in some quarters that traditional teaching methods might have some value in the acquisition of basic skills, there was only limited support for a return to these methods. There was strong support for the provision of ESL training for teachers in remote areas, and for the recognition of Aboriginal English for ESL purposes.

Bilingual education

5.21 The literacy area has tended to be dominated in recent years by debates over the value or otherwise of bilingual education. 'Bilingual education', however, has been a much-abused term. Among academics and educators it generally refers to a planned program that begins with instruction in the language of the child and involves the gradual transfer to English as the main language of instruction in the middle years of primary school. Among some community members and practitioners, however, it tends to be used synonymously with 'two way' education. Some witnesses in the inquiry used it in this way.

5.22 The debate over bilingual education should be put into some perspective. Most Indigenous people speak English as their first or only language. Bilingual education is not a serious issue for students from these backgrounds, although 'two way' education and the teaching of Indigenous languages as part of the LOTE program may be. Bilingual education is therefore a significant issue in the Northern Territory but is a relatively minor issue elsewhere in Australia.

5.23 The decision of the Northern Territory Government to phase out specific funding for bilingual education was made toward the end of the Committee's investigation, and the issue was the subject of some comment during visits and inspections in the Northern Territory. The Committee is reluctant to make any specific recommendations with regard to bilingual education. It notes the range of views from informed and experienced teaching practitioners and linguists. It also notes that Indigenous people are divided on the issue.

5.24 The Committee heard evidence from ATSIC representatives at its Canberra hearing that the removal by the Northern Territory Government of support for the bilingual program, carried through with 'minimum' consultation, represented a 'significant infringement of human rights'.¹⁵

5.25 This was not how Professor Paul Hughes, from the Narangga Yankuntjatjara community in South Australia, saw the issue. He informed the Committee that the first decision made by the Pitjantjatjara community on assuming control of the schools on their land in South Australia in 1992 was to abandon bilingual education. One reason was that it was not achieving results commensurate with the expenditure it required. Parents wanted schools to concentrate on teaching English as a second language and to separate the cultural domains of study, so as to include English in a Western domain. According to Hughes, there are not enough teachers in Australia who speak

15 Submission No. 34, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, vol. 5, pp. 142-145

both English and an Aboriginal language fluently. Nor is there an adequate body of literature in Aboriginal languages to support bilingual programs.¹⁶

5.26 The Committee notes adverse comment on bilingual education from other authorities. Torres Strait Islander academic, Martin Nakata, criticises the assumption that children quickly pick up a second language if they become literate in their first language. According to Nakata, this may apply well in the French-Canadian experience where both English and French are written languages, but bears little resemblance to the Torres Strait where the first language is an oral language. There are no reports in the literature, according to Nakata, of students who have undertaken a bilingual program in the Northern Territory entering university with better English language skills than Torres Strait Islander students.¹⁷

5.27 The Committee notes, however, that there have been positive comments on bilingual education from other sources. One case study on the bilingual program at Lajamanu School in the Northern Territory found evidence of measurable increases in levels of English language literacy and numeracy during the period in which the program was operating. In comparison to other schools with mainly Indigenous students, Lajamanu students were found to perform slightly above the average in mathematics and well above the average in literacy. Their overall performance was said to be the best of any of the Indigenous schools in the Northern Territory government school system at that time.¹⁸

5.28 At both Yuendumu and Papunya, in Central Australia, the Committee found a strong emphasis on instruction in Indigenous languages. The local community at Yuendumu saw literacy in the Warlpiri language as an important goal of schooling. A number of community members had undertaken teacher training and were teaching at the school. At Papunya Primary School there was a similar emphasis on instruction in Indigenous languages. The school operated a literacy centre that was engaged in producing texts in the Luritja language. The title of this report, *Katu Kalpa*, is a Luritja word used with the permission of the Papunya community. Loosely translated, it means 'Go for it' or 'Do your best'.¹⁹

5.29 Schools going down the path of bilingual education face a practical problem of identifying the first language of a child entering school, and of deciding which one to teach. This is relatively easy in the case of isolated communities such as Lajamanu. However, it presents problems in the Torres Strait where the first language may be either Creole or one of two traditional languages or their dialects. There is also a fear

16 Professor Paul Hughes, *Hansard*, Canberra, 30 August 1999, p. 340

17 Martin Nakata, 'Cutting a better deal for Torres Strait Islanders', *Youth Studies*, vol.14, no.4, December 1995, p. 31

18 Lee Cataldi and Gary Partington, 'Beyond Even Reasonable Doubt: Student Assessment', in Gary Partington ed., *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*, Social Science Press, Katoomba, 1998, p. 330

that the transcribing of traditional languages into written form may harm the rich oral tradition of the language. An example of this problem was presented to the Committee in Alice Springs, where evidence was given by a school principal on the difficulties of learning a written form of an Indigenous language:

...the Arrernte language has only been put on paper in comparatively recent times. The anthropologists and the literary people have not made it a user-friendly written language. ...hearing the words and seeing the writing, it is extremely difficult to see how they are linked. This is a problem for young kids particularly who speak the language but can in no way read it. ...There would be very few people who, if you gave them a sheet of Arrernte to read, could do it.²⁰

5.30 The majority of submissions to the *Learning Lessons* Review supported retention of the bilingual program, although as noted earlier this attitude was undoubtedly influenced by the manner in which the policy was announced. The report recommended shifting the focus on to 'both ways' education, involving a recognition of Indigenous languages, including Aboriginal English, and the provision of appropriate ESL support for Indigenous language speakers.

5.31 Decisions on bilingual education are largely the province of communities and educators. The Committee believes that bilingual education is one of a range of approaches that need to be considered in addressing the language needs of Indigenous communities. Bilingual education will not be appropriate in many situations. Where it is, however, and where it has the support of the community it deserves consideration.

Recommendation 15

5.32 The Committee recommends that support for bilingual education programs be maintained in those areas where they are seen as appropriate and necessary by Indigenous communities.

Aboriginal English

5.33 The recognition of Aboriginal English as a language in its own right is a relatively recent development and was touched on in a number of locations. Indigenous forms of English have developed in a wide range of areas and are frequently used as the main means of communication by many Indigenous people. The range of Aboriginal English and Kriol languages that can exist in particular areas are described in a policy document on two way learning from the Kimberley Catholic Education Office.

Those for whom Aboriginal English or Kriol is the main language may change their speech according to the situation, sometimes speaking S.A.E. [Standard Australian English] and other times Aboriginal English or Kriol. The best way to describe this is in terms of a continuum ranging between

Kriol and S.A.E. Although the speech of Aboriginal people in areas of the Kimberley can be identified by placement on this continuum, at any given time people will change their speech to a different position on the continuum depending on the social situation at the time. For example, there is a tendency for people to speak close to the S.A.E. end of the continuum whenever they are talking with English speakers.²¹

5.34 Many of the difficulties involving the use of Aboriginal English come not so much from the differences but from the surface similarities to standard English. In the past this caused much confusion and misunderstanding between teachers and students. The prevailing view was that Aboriginal English was simply bad English that needed correcting. Recognition of Aboriginal English focusses attention on the differences and enables teachers to recognise and teach these differences. It means teaching children that there are different forms of English language usage and that these are appropriate in different social situations.

5.35 What it needs, however, is teachers who can recognise the differences between the languages and teach appropriately. In particular, it needs teachers with ESL skills, as well as a recognition of Aboriginal English for ESL purposes. In this regard, it has always been somewhat more straightforward for the relatively small population of pure Indigenous language speakers, in that it has always been easier for both students and teachers to recognise standard English as a second language. Recognition of Aboriginal English also requires the development of good teaching and curriculum resources. One example provided to the Committee by the Kimberley Catholic Education Office was *Making the Jump*, a resource book for teachers of Aboriginal students which focusses on literacy.²² Another example provided by the Education Department of Western Australia was *Solid English*.²³

5.36 The Committee believes that it is important to note that recognition of Aboriginal English should in no way diminish the importance of standard English in the classroom. The fact that it focusses on the differences between the languages can in fact strengthen the teaching of standard English, particularly through the use of ESL approaches. As the policy document on two way learning from the Kimberley Catholic Education Office makes clear, 'even in the early grades S.A.E. must be used and actively modelled by the teacher, so that when the later stages of literacy are reached and the subject matter becomes more difficult, S.A.E. can be used as the main medium of teaching without disadvantage to the students'.²⁴

21 Catholic Education Office, Kimberley Region, *Two Way Learning: A Guide to Policy for Kimberley Catholic Schools*, Broome, 1994, p. 6

22 Rosalind Berry and Joyce Hudson, *Making the Jump*, Catholic Education Office, Kimberley Region, Broome, 1997

23 Education Department of Western Australia, *Solid English*, Perth, 1999

24 Catholic Education Office, Kimberley Region, *Two Way Learning: A Guide to Policy for Kimberley Catholic Schools*, Broome, 1994, p. 7

5.37 The 1992 House of Representatives report on Indigenous languages expressed regret that Aboriginal English was treated as an inferior or corrupted version of English. The report argued that this attitude in schools was a significant factor in the poor academic performance of Aboriginal children.²⁵ In view of the clearly expressed views of parents and teachers about the importance of learning Standard English, it would seem that Aboriginal English should best be regarded in schools as a pathway or transition to Standard English. This appeared to be the approach that was being taken in those locations visited by the Committee where Aboriginal English was being used. However, the Committee heard some concerns that Aboriginal English was still not recognised for ESL purposes in some locations.

5.38 The teaching of Creole languages has been a controversial issue outside Australia, but has attracted less argument in this country. The 'Black English' issue in the United States has from time to time divided the education community in that country. Proponents of Black English in the United States saw it as an affirmation of Black culture. Its critics saw its use in schools as contributing to a form of linguistic segregation which would result in the continuing low rate of black employment in the mainstream workforce. While it is estimated that 80 per cent of African Americans use Black English to a greater or lesser extent, the use of Aboriginal English is less extensive, although it does function as a symbol of Aboriginal identity where it is used. The Committee heard no views supporting the teaching of Aboriginal English in preference to standard English, for no other reason than because standard English is the language needed to co-exist with the dominant culture.

Literacy in urban and regional areas

5.39 The Committee believes that issues such as bilingual education are less relevant to the majority of Indigenous students. It remains concerned that the needs of Indigenous students in urban areas should be addressed. Although literacy levels are higher in urban areas, they still lag behind levels for non-Indigenous students.

5.40 The Commonwealth is currently developing an Indigenous literacy and numeracy strategy but is yet to announce any details. The strategy will involve setting national literacy and numeracy benchmarks. All children will be assessed against an agreed set of performance standards. The strategy will promote successful practice across the schools sector and encourage systems to rethink teaching practice and develop more relevant curricula for Indigenous students.

5.41 The Commonwealth also funds intensive English language tuition for Indigenous language speaking students under ESL funding. This funding provides intensive tuition over a twelve month period and can also be used for professional development for teachers.

25 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Language and Culture – A Matter of Survival: Report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maintenance*, Canberra, 1992, p. 29

5.42 While a focus on outcomes has been welcomed in many quarters, it has been pointed out that culturally inappropriate benchmarks and assessments can be counter-productive, and that the content of instruction needs careful consideration. The Committee trusts that these considerations are taken into account in any Commonwealth strategy on literacy and numeracy.

Teaching Indigenous languages

5.43 Another area of debate is in the teaching of Indigenous languages in schools. Priority six of the MCEETYA National Strategy calls for support for the teaching of Indigenous languages to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. There is strong support for this among those who see it as an essential element in the preservation of Indigenous languages. It thus receives a great deal of support from linguists and anthropologists.

5.44 Many Indigenous parents and teachers also support the teaching of Indigenous languages in schools. Others take a different view: that preservation of the language is a family and community responsibility. One of the stated reasons for the termination of the bilingual education program in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands, for example, was the belief that teaching of the language by people who were not native speakers was tending to corrupt the language.²⁶ As one Indigenous educator from Adelaide told the Committee, language is only one small component of Indigenous education today. The tenor of his comment suggested that not all Indigenous people believed that the role of the family needed reinforcement in the classroom.²⁷

5.45 The Committee heard evidence in Adelaide of the work undertaken by Aboriginal languages curriculum officers of the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment. A ten year program in that state has given support to the revival of Indigenous languages, although this program is dependent on the support of school communities. The choice of Indigenous languages taught as part of the Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program is determined as much by the availability of curriculum support material as it is by the residual use of a particular local language. Where local language material is not available, the attitude of the department has been that it is better to push ahead with a South Australian Aboriginal language that has materials available and ready to go.²⁸ However, there has been considerable work undertaken in the development of curriculum materials in recent years.

5.46 The Committee noted the benefits of including Indigenous languages in the curriculum were not easily measurable. One witness stated that the main benefit was to affirm identity and affirm partnerships between schools and communities and to empower communities. It was put to the Committee that there are advantages to

26 *ibid.*, p. 37

27 Mr Roger Thomas, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 95

28 Mr Guy Tunstill, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 85

learning Indigenous languages in school because schools provide a different context through which learning growth can occur.²⁹ The Committee sees no inconsistency between the encouragement of efforts to preserve Indigenous languages and that of ensuring the best method of teaching English. It notes the understandable enthusiasm of linguists for language preservation programs, but notes also that this enthusiasm is not always shared beyond scholars of language.

5.47 At the broader level, the teaching of Indigenous languages has a role to play in language maintenance and revival, and in the promotion of greater cultural awareness among the broader community. This teaching is still very much in its infancy. Many schools have actively suppressed Indigenous languages in the past. Whether they can now do the opposite is the subject of some debate. While there will inevitably be debates over appropriateness and methods, however, the learning of Indigenous languages as part of the LOTE program can offer benefits to all students. These benefits extend beyond cultural maintenance and into the areas of cross-cultural understanding and cognitive development.

29 Mr Greg Wilson, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, pp. 88-89