

# PATHWAYS OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL

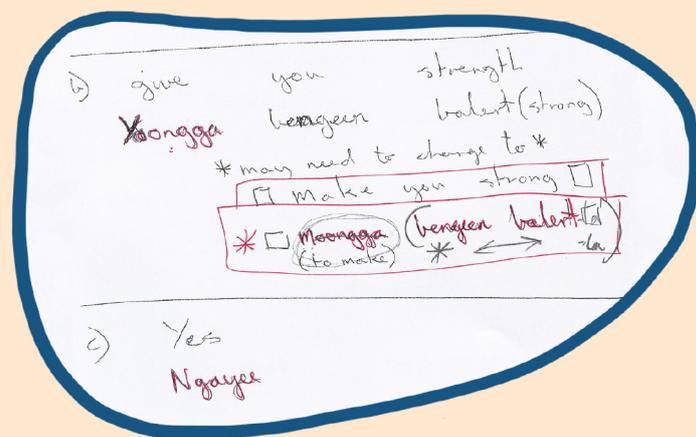
## STAGES AND PROCESSES

### There is no one right pathway for reviving language.

Different communities may prioritise: cultural knowledge, traditional grammar, the knowledge or preferences of Elders, Language in schools, foundation resources such as a dictionary, songs and stories for children, language for public use, or other goals.

Some groups have Elders who speak or remember language; some have access to a linguist they know and trust; some have rich Language records. You may be responding to interest from a school, or awareness that your Elders' knowledge is precious and time limited, or you may be looking for a better understanding of who you are.

All of these starting points and priorities help to motivate and shape your language revival pathways. For example:



Work in progress: Wathaurong translation for film on William Buckley (David Tournier)

#### If you have...

Elders who speak Language or cultural knowledge...

Many different historical sources of Language...

Good access to linguistic support...

A local school asking for Language in the classroom...

Many requests for welcomes, names for buildings etc. ....

Young people wanting to know about their language...

#### your pathway might emphasise...

... listening to Elders, encouraging talking out on Country with them, recording their knowledge

... collating all the words from all the sources into one database

... preparing an easily accessible dictionary and grammar to draw on for resources and teaching

... making educational resources, developing songs and games

... small projects to get Language into speeches and signage on country

... quick-lookup apps for phones and ipads

### Language revival is a process, not a destination.

It is easy to get held back at the start of reviving your language by worrying about whether the spelling, or the words, or the pronunciation, or the grammar – are correct. But all languages go through successive stages of understanding along the revival journey. If you wait till all the research is done, all the decisions are final, everything that can be known is known – you will never be able to start. Instead, it works better to use what you know right now as best you can, at each stage of your journey, and develop your knowledge and confidence as you go. This allows everyone to learn, and allows the language to emerge into the community again. People around you, such as school partners, will need to understand that the language is in process, and so aspects of it will undoubtedly change over time. There may be more words, better understanding of word meanings, adjustments to the spelling, changes in policy and practice of the grammar.

# PATHWAYS OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL

## THOUGHTS ABOUT STAGES AND PROCESSES

*“So you skill yourself up to those particular areas and it opens the doors for you, and you just look at things in a different light, and say, ‘Ooh yes, we can do that. We can do this. We can do that.’” - Jenni Beer*

*“Where Language is vulnerable, I think the list is an important starting point, so that people are not continually having to do that research all over again. Because it takes years. And the dictionary is a base point. You can add to it, you can revise it, you can forget about it, but you can always return to it if you need to. Whereas people with cultural Elders – if they can absorb all the knowledge that those people know, then they don’t need the list. But I would argue that virtually every Victorian language needs some kind of base point to protect the language.” - Bruce Pascoe*

*“We have to facilitate the building of relations between towns, between communities of the same Language Nation, and their relationships with schools. And often we get well into the end of the first year, before we actually sit down and do some hard Language or linguistic work. Because there is so much that needs to happen before people feel comfortable enough, and the community feel that they have ownership of what goes on.” - Kevin Lowe*

*“You have old evidence of how your Old People spoke words, through recordings, and then you would hear those words, and then you would learn how to spell those words, using a linguistic framework. And that’s part of the journey that I had to go on. And it still hasn’t stopped, because it’s created another cycle. The next cycle is to create the dictionary, the tape, and write more stories. So that I leave the next legacy from the old unseen legacies of our Ancestors. Start creating another picture, for our young to take control.” - Carolyn Briggs*

*“It was the first stage dictionary because it came out in a hurry. And we’re learning from that first stage dictionary to go on to the second stage. There’s no bad thing about the first stage dictionary. The words have been put into books, other people have got em because they’ve gone to Language camps. And there’s a few words in it, so they had some words. And if I didn’t have that first stage dictionary, I wouldn’t be able to translate what I have been doing in the last two years.” - Lee Healy*

*“Proper Language revival process needs that cultural knowledge, the cultural context and the underpinning knowledge, to make it make sense. There’s no point in talking about that tree, unless you really understand what that tree means. So yes, we’re doing Language revival, but that underpinning knowledge is really important to that Language revival. So I think ours is very much on-Country focus. Language, right? not in isolation from that context – and I think that’s where it’s different to some of the others.” - Doris Paton*

*“On my journey along the language reclamation and revitalisation track I am in awe and inspired by those I meet who are taking the same journey. This same journey has many pathways and many stories, but in the end we are striving for the same goal – to re-learn our Mother Tongue, to keep our culture strong and hand it on to the next generations.” - Vicki Couzens*