

# LANGUAGE REVIVAL IN PRACTICE

## SIGNS

Signs are a great way of making Language visible in the community. They are a way of asserting the importance of Language on Country and a chance for sharing with the wider community. Signs are also a way to teach lots more people about culture. Along with signs that welcome people to Country or acknowledge Country, signs in special places such as gardens or on walks can be a way to share information about culture and history. Signs around the home or office can integrate language into routine activity.

## LANGUAGE WORDS IN PUBLIC SPACE

Using Language in community contexts gives people a chance to get used to seeing it around and feeling more comfortable with it. This is an important part of creating safe spaces where people can speak to each other in Language. Language can also create a stronger sense of belonging and being welcome.



## A CHALLENGE: WORDS FOR NEW CONCEPTS

Signs can sometimes be challenging if they require words that haven't been recorded or remembered. This is especially true for things that are new in the culture.

“Now we didn't have a word for 'office'. Where was black fellas living in an office?! Big gum over there – that's my office there. But here we have a European concept, from an Aboriginal person, to put into Language... I look at the translation – I look at the English version of it, and then go, 'Well, hang on, we don't have that in our language. However, we do have this, which is a similar meaning.' A good example now is, the playgroup has asked me to do some signage for them: 'No children beyond this point'. We don't have the word 'point', and we don't have the word 'beyond', so I've got ngan-ngan which is 'no', and boorai or boorron, so 'no children'. That's it. So now I'm looking for something to put on the end to say 'past here', because we don't have the word 'past', or 'near' or something like that. It makes you think of other words, rather than just the main concept that you're trying to get through. Cos those other words can still get the story across, but in a different, roundabout way. And I find it's a great way of doing stuff, like that, because you can really play with it.” - David Tournier

# LANGUAGE REVIVAL WORKSHOP

## SIGNS

Although there can be some challenges in finding the words you need, making signs can be a quick way to get language out into the community. This activity will be different depending on the kinds of resources you have available.

For example, you could:

- Take a look around a shared space that is used by many people in your community. What kinds of signs are there already? What other kinds of signs could be useful?
  - Work in partnership with another Aboriginal organisation (for example, a Health service) to develop signs for their building.
  - Plan signs that explain some aspects of a special place for visitors (for example interpretive signs on a local nature walk).
- It's probably a good idea to start small, with signs in a well-used building, and plan for bigger projects as you gain in confidence.

This workshop focuses on signs for a shared, frequently used space.

Start by getting everyone together for a cuppa or some lunch to think about using language on signs:

1. Make a list of the different signs around the place.
2. Think about which of these signs are easy to translate into language.
3. Think about whether some of the signs could be translated in more creative ways (see quote from David Tournier above).
4. Maybe there's room for a bit of fun too! (For example by using names for male and female animals to label the men's and women's toilets...)
5. Are there other signs you could make? Some organisations like to label ordinary things in Language – tea, sugar, hot water...
6. Type up the signs you've made on the computer or use your textas and paints to create beautiful original signs.
7. Stick them up and enjoy!

There are lots of different possibilities you could focus on. A project creating informal signage in Aboriginal controlled spaces is much easier to finish than a project for public signage or for a place administered by another institution.



Brochure for Aboriginal Health Centre (Gumbaynggirr)

### 8. Fire exit FIRE + EXIT

Weeyn + to go - wada/yana/geego/dhoowee  
Weeyn + open - bakoppma/werupmering  
Weeyn + outside - kale-werrango

Final wording for sign:  
WEEYN YANA KALE WERRANGO - FIRE EXIT

Working notes for signs at the Wathaurong Coop, Geelong (David Tournier)