

## Historic Launch of First Nations Family Language Learning Project

An historic First Nations language launch was held in the town of Norseman in the Goldfields region of Western Australia on Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2026. It was the launch of the Ngadju Language Family Learning project. The project is the first of its kind to provide First Nations families with resources over two years to teach language in the home.

What began as a dream became a reality after many years of work by speakers!

Ngadju Elder, Valma Schultz gave an impassioned speech which started with an audio recording of her grandfather speaking fluent Ngadju in the 1970s. *'Our language carries more than words. It carries the names of this country. The seasons. The knowledge of how to live on this land. The relationships between families. The law. When language lives, all of that lives. And that is what we are here for today. Not to preserve something in a museum. But to keep it moving. Mouth to ear. Elder to child. Generation to generation. The way it was always meant to travel.'*

The launch was kicked off with delivery of pack one of the 9 packs of resources intended for families to use in the home to teach children the Ngadju language from birth. Parents attending were presented with their first pack at the launch.

The Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre (GALCAC) developed the series of 9 packs of materials aimed at resourcing Ngadju families to teach children Ngadju language from birth to 2 years of age. Families will receive a new pack of materials every 3 months. *'Parents are the child's first teachers; the home is the child's first classroom'* stated GALCAC CEO, Sue Hanson. *'This series of packs places the Ngadju resources in the hands of those first teachers - mum, dad, nana, grandpa, and everyone in the household.'*

The development of the packs took 2.5 years as Ngadju speakers, linguists, graphic designers, and educators worked to create the sequential program and accompanying resources. Included in the pack is additional material suitable for older children and adults such as alphabet posters, crossword puzzle books, t-shirts, and Ngadju games. Everyone in the family can engage with Ngadju together.

Ngadju Elder, Les Schultz, stated, *'The future of Ngadju language is in our hands. The hands of mums and dads. Let's make sure we provide those people with the tools they need to get on with the job of teaching our language.'*

Funds for the development phase came through the Federal Government's Indigenous Languages and the Arts program. Funding for resource printing was provided by the State Library of Western Australia's Better Beginnings Program, and Ngadju Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (NNTAC). NNTAC will undertake the role of providing packs to registered Ngadju families every three months for the next 10 years.

NNTAC CEO, Stephen Rogers spoke about how the PBC was very proud to support the Ngadju Nation in this way, and had ensured that language was included in the organisation's

strategic plan as it is recognised as an incredibly important part of Ngadju people's future. Stephen stated, *'We don't want to be known as the generation that let Ngadju language die. I'm looking forward to hearing the children speak Ngadju.'*

The family language learning project was born from the Ngadju speech community's aim to ensure Ngadju was one of the children's mother-tongue bilingual languages, rather than their second language. The ambitious aim to provide enough Ngadju input for children to become bilingual resulted in the production of a sequential series of 90 children's books and short films for the 0–2 year age range. *'You are not just teaching language. You are restoring something to our people. You are telling our children — you come from something deep. You come from something old. You come from something worth knowing,'* said Valma Schultz.

The next development in the Family Language Learning project is to continue resourcing families with material for children aged 2-5 years, with the long-term aim to provide a 5–9 year olds program as well. Fully supporting families with vibrant, sequential, fun language learning material for the child's first 10 years is a solid and timely investment for the severely endangered Ngadju language.

Linguists from GALCAC will monitor the use of the materials to make modifications to the program, and eventually release a paper on the project's outcomes. The materials and films will be made available on GALCAC's website in the coming few weeks.

Families with Ngadju heritage who would like to apply to be on the program to receive the packs are encouraged to contact NNTAC to register.

Further information and interviews contact

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