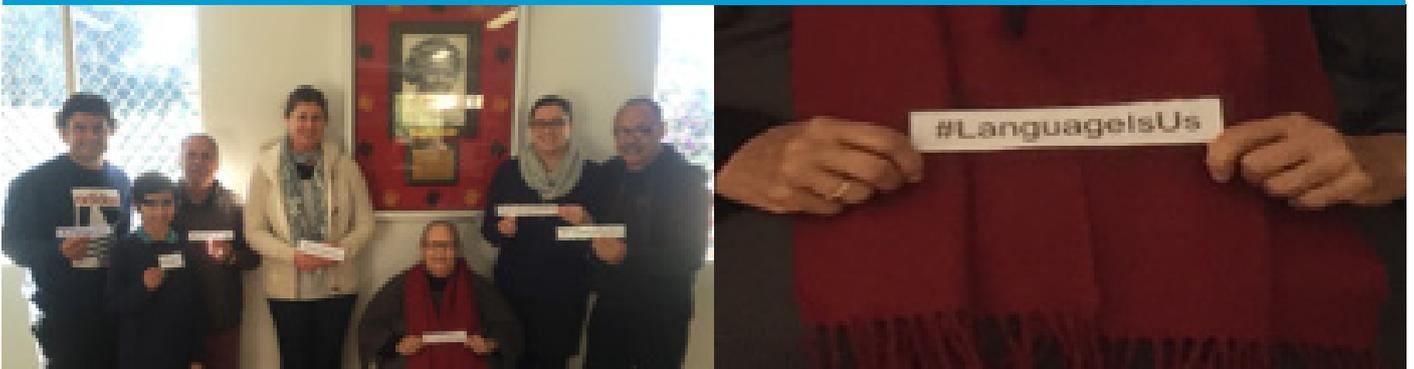




## Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC)

### Media Release

## #LanguagelsUs<sup>1</sup> Campaign to Ensure Aboriginal Ownership of Language



**Photo:** Intergenerational learning occurs as a result of community based lessons. Left to right: Clark Webb, Rayden Hoskins with his grandfather Uncle Barry, Helene Eneveldson, and 3 generations of the Craig family, Aunty Anita, Ashleigh and Ken Jr.

**Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC) has strong concerns about the current NSW Department of Education initiative to ‘teach’ Aboriginal languages.** Aboriginal corporations across NSW have been working with local Elders, utilizing local cultures and developing culturally appropriate ways to share language and culture with our young people. Aboriginal language teaching should be governed by Aboriginal communities.

BMNAC Executive Director, Clark Webb claims that ‘it is time for Aboriginal communities to be respected as the owners of our language and culture. Aboriginal people should determine how our languages are taught and learned. We should be the decision makers regarding cultural appropriateness and ensuring the safety of our language and culture.’

It wasn’t so long ago that the Department of Education banished Aboriginal languages from our communities by punishing Aboriginal students for using language. Gumbaynggirr Elder and BMNAC Board member, Uncle Barry Hoskins, remembers that time. ‘Aboriginal kids were actually punished for speaking language when I was at school, so how can the Department of Education now decide how my children and grandchildren learn our language?’

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<sup>1</sup> Respected Bangerang Elder from Victoria, the late Uncle John ‘Sandy’ Atkinson, stated that ‘language is us.’ We view this quote as a perfect summary of what our languages are about and would like to thank the Atkinson family for allowing us to use #LanguagelsUs for this campaign.

For many years Aboriginal activists and communities have fought for self-determination over our own affairs. Language and culture are sacred aspects of our lives that we need to own and determine. Let's unite as a conscious Black Australia, aided by our non-Aboriginal supporters, and not allow the Department that once banned our language to now take ownership by dictating how it is taught and learned.

BMNAC believes that the resources allocated to the NSW Department of Education for language teaching should be redirected to local Aboriginal Corporations with a proven record of revitalizing their local language. This will respect Aboriginal ownership and provide a culturally appropriate process for teaching Aboriginal language.

BMNAC is calling for support from Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal people to respect the rights of Aboriginal Australia to determine how our languages and cultures are preserved and passed on. You can support this campaign by staying connected to our website ([bmnac.org.au](http://bmnac.org.au)) and Facebook page ([Facebook.com/Bularri](https://www.facebook.com/Bularri)) where we will upload further papers that more extensively articulate the need for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal languages. People from all walks of life can demonstrate support by using our hash-tags #LanguagelsUs #OurLanguageOurSoul #OurLanguage #Speakit on social media. Non-Aboriginal supporters can also use these hash-tags with a short description similar to 'I completely understand why Aboriginal communities need control over their languages and cultures and I stand in solidarity with this campaign.'