

# Kimberley Interpreting Service

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NAATI Interpreters for Aboriginal Languages

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## KIS Funding secured

*Three state government departments come to the rescue for KIS*

KIS will soon be entering its third year of operations and thanks to three departments within the Government of Western Australia has secured funding until the end of this financial year.

Ministry of Justice announced recently the allocation of \$45,000 for KIS, in recognition of the large number of bookings the service receives from the courts and legal services. Department of Indigenous Affairs and Department of Health have each contributed \$20,000 which will enable KIS to consolidate its position as the only provider of indigenous language interpreters in Western Australia.

At a recent meeting in Broome, Attorney-General, Jim McGinty said, [KIS] 'played an invaluable role in the justice system for Aboriginal people, where English was their second, third or fourth language. It allows Aboriginal defendants and witnesses to better understand, and participate in, court proceedings.'

KIS would like to thank all representatives of the State Government who have worked so hard to acquire these funds. We also acknowledge the support we have received from the WA Department of Employment and Training for enabling KIS to become established.

## HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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## Interpreting Health Posters

### Launched in Broome and Kununurra

*Major sponsor Argyle Diamonds supports KIS efforts to raise awareness of Aboriginal Interpreters in Hospitals*

Kimberley Interpreting Service (KIS) held a launch at OVAHS in Kununurra and at the Aboriginal Medical Service in Broome in June to promote their new posters aimed at health professionals. Representatives from the local community and government agencies attended the launch and caught up with what KIS has been doing in the last few months. Mirima Council Chairperson David Newry addressed the guests in Kununurra, as did the Kimberley Development Commission's John Smoker.

KIS has been providing NAATI accredited Aboriginal language interpreters since November 2000 with most of their work taking place in the courts. Anecdotal evidence suggests Aboriginal people also need interpreters when visiting their local clinic or hospital and the new posters have been designed to get the message across to the medical sector.

The posters were sponsored by Argyle Diamonds, Office of Aboriginal Health, Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service, Kimberley Development Commission and Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring, Language and Culture Centre. Refreshments at the launch were supplied by Tuckerbox Stores.



John Smoker of the Kimberley Development Commission addressed the gathering in Kununurra.

See page 2 for more photos and details of the Broome launch.

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## New Coordinator for Kimberley Interpreting Service

Earlier this year, KIS Project Officer Tea Dietterich moved to Queensland, but continued to manage operations from her new home in Cairns.

As Tea is not planning to return to the Kimberley any time soon the decision was made to advertise for a new coordinator. After several weeks of advertising and interviewing Lesley Baxter of Broome has been appointed as the new Coordinator for Kimberley Interpreting Service.

Lesley has lived in the West Kimberley for 20 years, and comes to KIS following three years as Principal at Karrayili Adult Education Centre in Fitzroy Crossing.

Lesley will commence her new position on 15 August 2002 and is looking forward to the challenge of consolidating the service and building on the hard work put in by Tea.

In particular, KIS is hoping to formalise its management structure with the establishment of a Steering Committee made up of representatives of Mirima Council and Kimberley Language Resource Centre (committee and staff) and an interpreter representative. KIS will also focus more strongly on professional development for interpreters and raising awareness amongst KIS client groups - both indigenous and non-indigenous.

We would like to thank Tea for all her efforts in making KIS a reality and wish Lesley all the best in her new role.



*New KIS Coordinator, Lesley Baxter*

## Interpreting Poster launched in Broome

Communication problems? Get an interpreter! This is the message of a colourful poster that was launched by June Oscar, Chairperson of the Kimberley Language Resource Centre. Nearly 20 people representing a number of organisations and departments were present at the launch at Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council seminar room, Broome. When launching the poster, Ms Oscar described the work of the Kimberley Interpreting Service which links people needing interpreting help with qualified interpreters across the Kimberley. The poster, designed and painted by Mark Nodea of Warmun Community will be a reminder to both health professionals and the patients to ask for an interpreter when communication is difficult.

Annette Kogolo, one of the interpreters from Fitzroy Crossing spoke about her training and experience in interpreting. She has worked in a number of different situations including health and native title between English and Walmajarri and between English and Kriol.



*Joyce Hudson, Eirlys Richards, Annette Kogolo and Jeannie Warbie in Broome at the poster launch*

When MLA for Kimberley, Carol Martin spoke she emphasised how important an interpreting service is to people whose first language is not English - which accounts for a large proportion of indigenous people across the Kimberley. "This is particularly the case in the health scene where people needing medical attention are their most vulnerable and need the comfortableness of being able to use their first language," she said.

At present, there are qualified interpreters in Kununurra, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Warmun and Balgo. Four people from Broome have committed themselves to do interpreter training with Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory this year.

## Politicians pledge support for KIS

*Barry Haase and Carol Martin go in to bat for Aboriginal language interpreters....*

Barry Haase, MHR for Kalgoorlie, visited Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring, Language and Culture Centre in Kununurra in May to offer his support for the Kimberley Interpreting Service (KIS). In a meeting with Mirima Council Chairperson David Newry and Language Centre Coordinator Keeley Palmer, Mr Haase discussed language and culture issues and reiterated his belief that KIS provides a vital link between service providers and indigenous language speakers in the Kimberley. Mr Haase has demonstrated his support for the service in the past by writing to key ministers of the Federal Government about the need to secure ongoing funding.

KIS is the only Aboriginal Interpreting Service in Western Australia, providing skilled, NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) accredited Aboriginal interpreters within WA, training new interpreters, and providing ongoing professional development. The Service provides an invaluable tool for the improvement of service delivery and communication within the Kimberley Region, as well as statewide.



*David Newry & Barry Haase at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring, Kununurra*

Carol Martin, Member for Kimberley has also been a vocal supporter of KIS and spoke to the gathering at the recent Poster launch in Broome (see Page 2). Carol is also lobbying for the future of the service and is pleased with the support shown by the Government of Western Australia.

"We have been working very hard to lobby for funds for the interpreting service at both the State and Federal level", Language Centre Coordinator Keeley Palmer said. "Having the support of our elected representatives, and knowing someone is speaking up for us in Canberra and Perth is of vital importance. We would like to thank Mr Haase and Ms Martin for taking the time to visit us, and hope we can continue to work together to secure the future for KIS."

## Indigenous Languages disappearing at the rate of one a year.

According to a recent report in *The Weekend Australian* (15-16 June 2002) Aboriginal languages are dying all over the nation.

The death of Big Bill Neidjie in May drew the nation's attention to the fate of many indigenous languages as the Gagadju tongue died with him.

Estimates put the number of languages in Australia in 1788 at 250. Of these 100 have disappeared completely and another 100 or so are classed as endangered – with small numbers of speakers who are mainly elderly.

In the Kimberley, it is hard to put an exact figure on the number of indigenous language speakers, as there has been little in the way of accurate surveys. Experts agree, however, that much work still needs to be done to maintain and preserve the languages of the region whilst the elderly, fluent speakers are still with us.

Kimberley Interpreting Service plays a vital role in the preservation of this linguistic diversity. The first language of Aboriginal people is recognised as an equally valid means of communicating and people who have mastery of both English and their traditional language are viewed as an important resource to the community and treated accordingly.

With more work and recognition it is hoped this language decline can be halted and reversed.

## Contacting KIS

Have you been having trouble getting in touch with us lately?

Tea has been on leave and also finished her contract with KIS. While we have been recruiting we have had to rely on Language Centre staff to 'hold the fort'.

We apologise for any inconvenience and promise business as usual once our new Coordinator is on board.

Thanks to all staff at Kimberley Language Resource Centre and Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring for helping out!

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**KIS presentation at  
Australian Linguistics Institute Conference**

Olive Knight (KIS Interpreter) and Siobhan Casson (KLRC, Halls Creek) attended the 2002 Indigenous Languages Program at Macquarie University in Sydney. The program, held from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July, was part of the Australian Linguistics Institute's biennial conference. Aboriginal language interpreters from all over Australia attended the Interpreting and Translating strand of the Indigenous program.

Olive and Siobhan ran a workshop for these interpreters called "The Code of Ethics and Community-Based Interpreting". The Code of Ethics (the set of "rules" for the interpreting profession) can often be a source of problems for community-based Aboriginal language interpreters due to cultural and linguistic differences between European and Aboriginal society.

Three of the main topics of discussion were:

Accuracy – there are often great difficulties for Aboriginal language interpreters, particularly in the areas of health and law, in trying to interpret/translate European concepts and meanings. It was noted that users of interpreters often expect 'word for word' translations and become frustrated when this does not seem possible.

Confidentiality and Impartiality – these are concepts that can work in a society without such a big emphasis on group/shared responsibility. For Aboriginal interpreters, the kinship system and family relationships are very important concepts that run through the whole of their society. The notions of *confidential* and *impartial* can put a lot of pressure on the interpreter, who is trying to be a good member of their society while abiding by the rules of another society.

Olive and Gail Smiler, another KIS interpreter, will use the feedback from this workshop when they give a presentation on the Code of Ethics at the AUSIT AGM in Perth in October.

If any Aboriginal language interpreters reading this newsletter want to add their comments to those of the interpreters at the Sydney workshop, please contact KIS.

**NAIDOC WEEK 2002**

***Recognition, Rights and Reform***

KIS once again had a high profile at the Kununurra NAIDOC Week Open Day in Whitegum Park. Sharing a stall with Mirima Dawang Woorlabgerring, Language and Culture Centre, KIS gave out posters, brochures and newsletters, as well as showing interpreting videos.

Visitors to the park were treated to live music, traditional dancing, kangaroo stew and damper and the ever popular baby competition.

Thanks to all the NAIDOC Committee for their hard work this year, and thanks to the major sponsor, Argyle Diamonds, as well as Lake Argyle Cruises, Grab-A-Bargain Variety Store, Ord River Sports Club, Kimberley Land Council, and Mirima Dawang Woorlabgerring, Language and Culture Centre.

**FOUNDATION FOR ENDANGERED  
LANGUAGES VISIT THE  
KIMBERLEY**

*Kimberley languages face a similar struggle to  
minority languages overseas*

Nicholas Ostler from the Foundation for Endangered Languages visited Halls Creek recently and spoke to staff from Kimberley Language Resource Centre and Mirima Dawang Woorlabgerring, Language and Culture Centre.

The Foundation supports projects working with endangered languages throughout the world and Nick's visit provided an important insight into the work of other minority language speakers in countries across the Americas and in Europe.

Kimberley linguists Joseph Blythe and Frances Kofod are attending the Foundation's Conference on Endangered Languages and their Literatures in Guatemala in August to present a paper entitled 'Literature for the semi-literate: Issues for Emerging Literacies in the Kimberley Region of North-Western Australia.'

For more information on the Foundation for Endangered Languages contact

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