

Language and culture revitalisation: 'official' models and support vs. local needs – experiences in South Australia

Peter K. Austin

Emeritus Professor in Field Linguistics

SOAS University of London

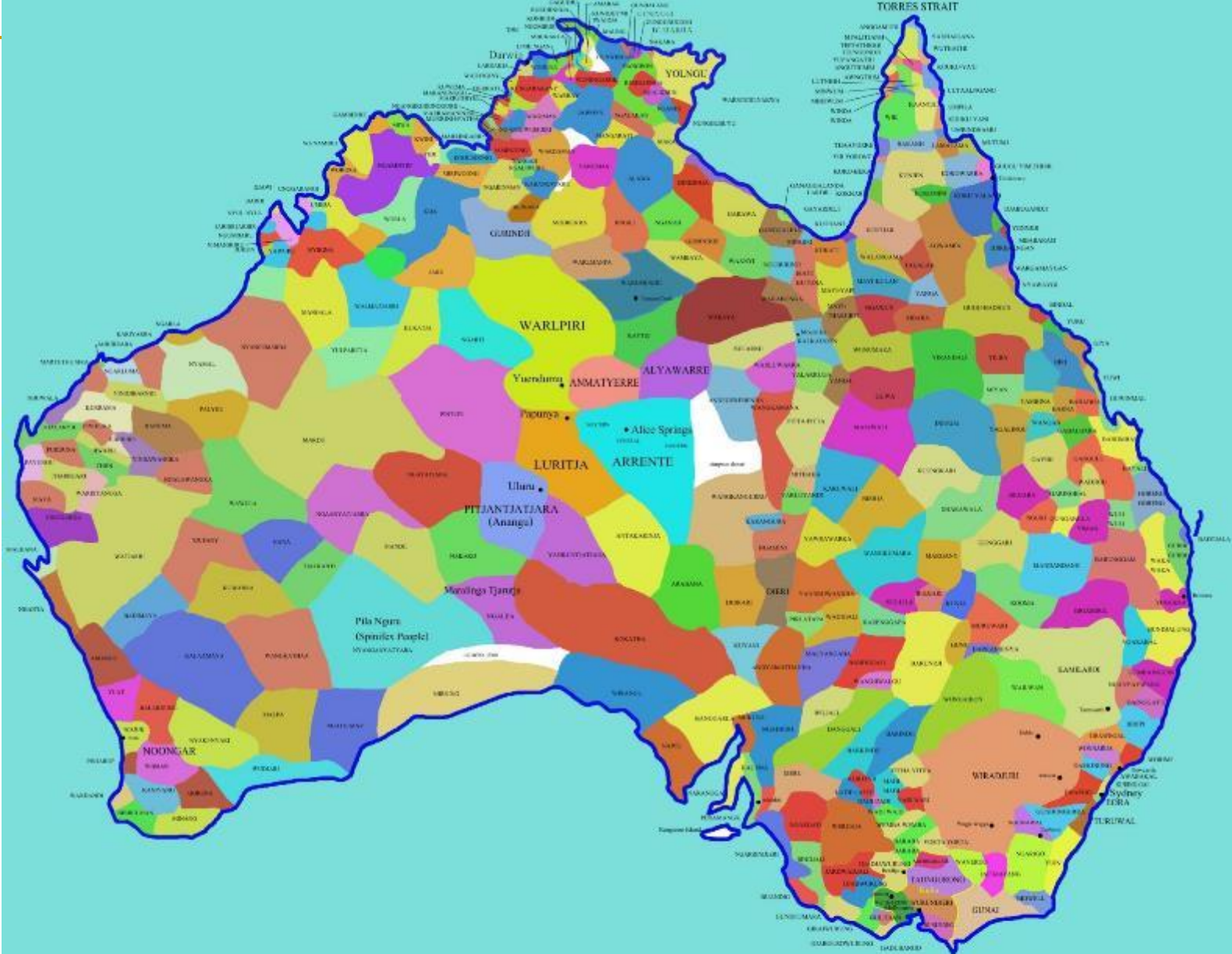
SOAS University of London, 2023-03-23

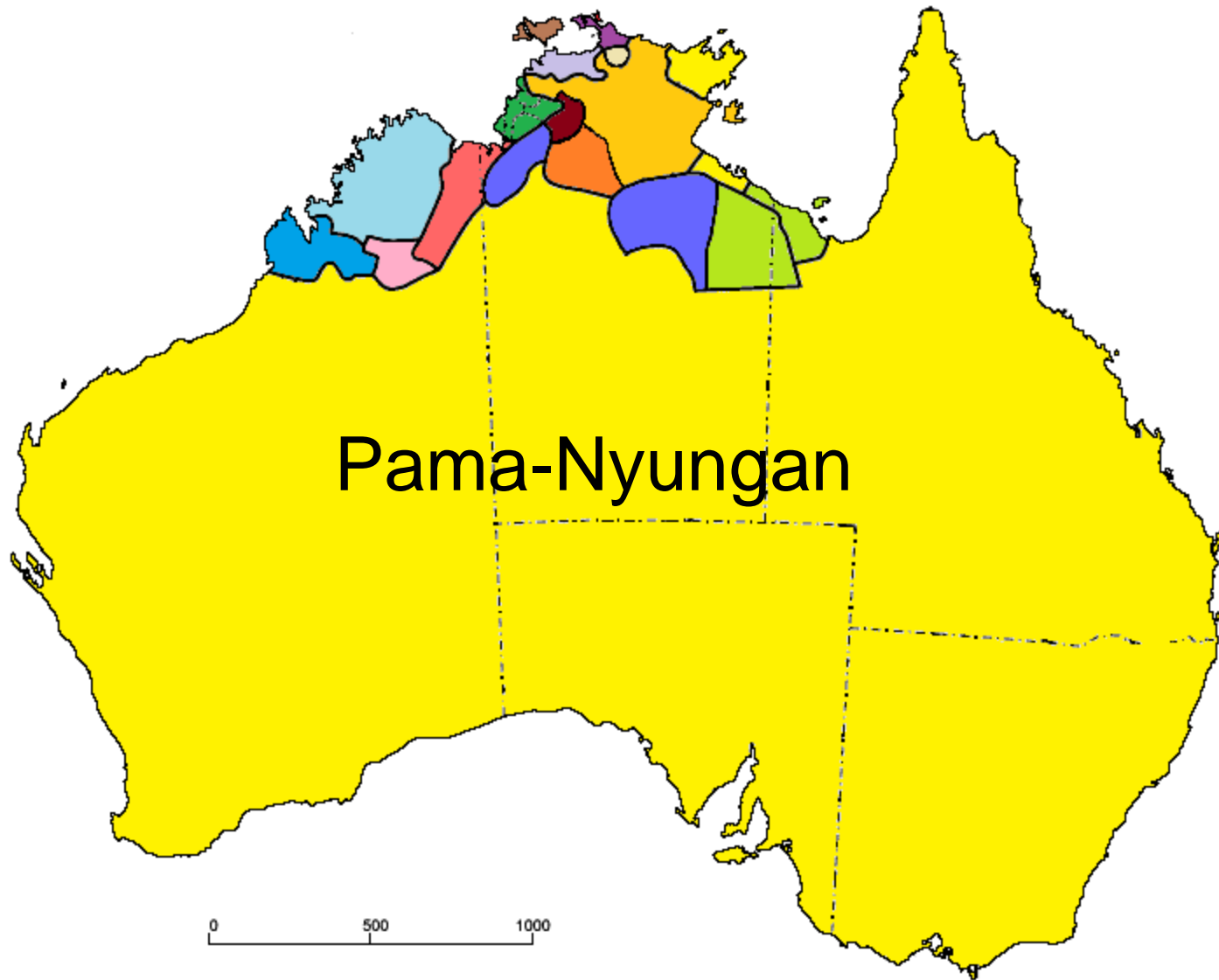
Overview

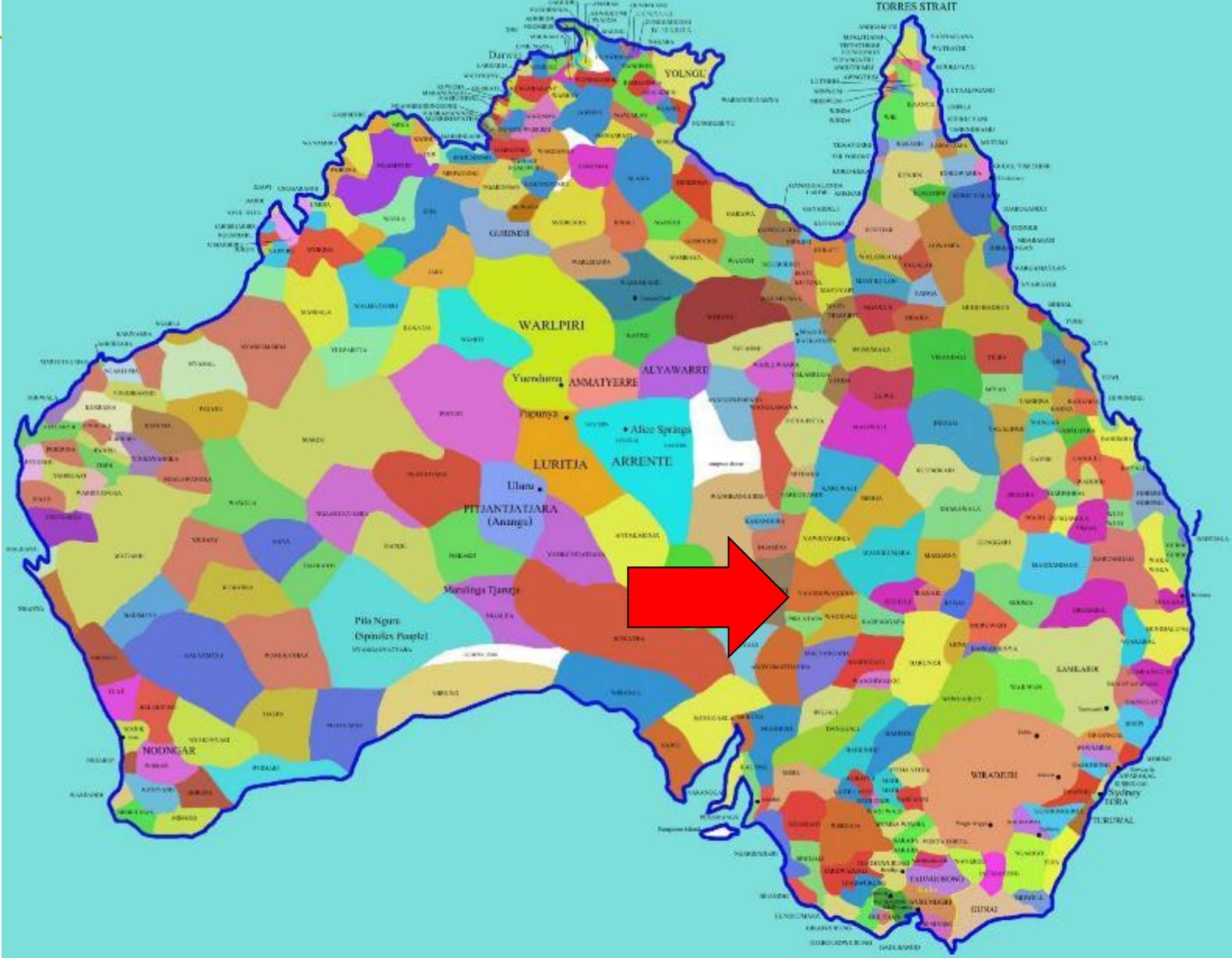
- Revitalisation models and mechanisms
 - Case study: Diyari (Dieri) South Australia
 - Conclusions and Q&A
-

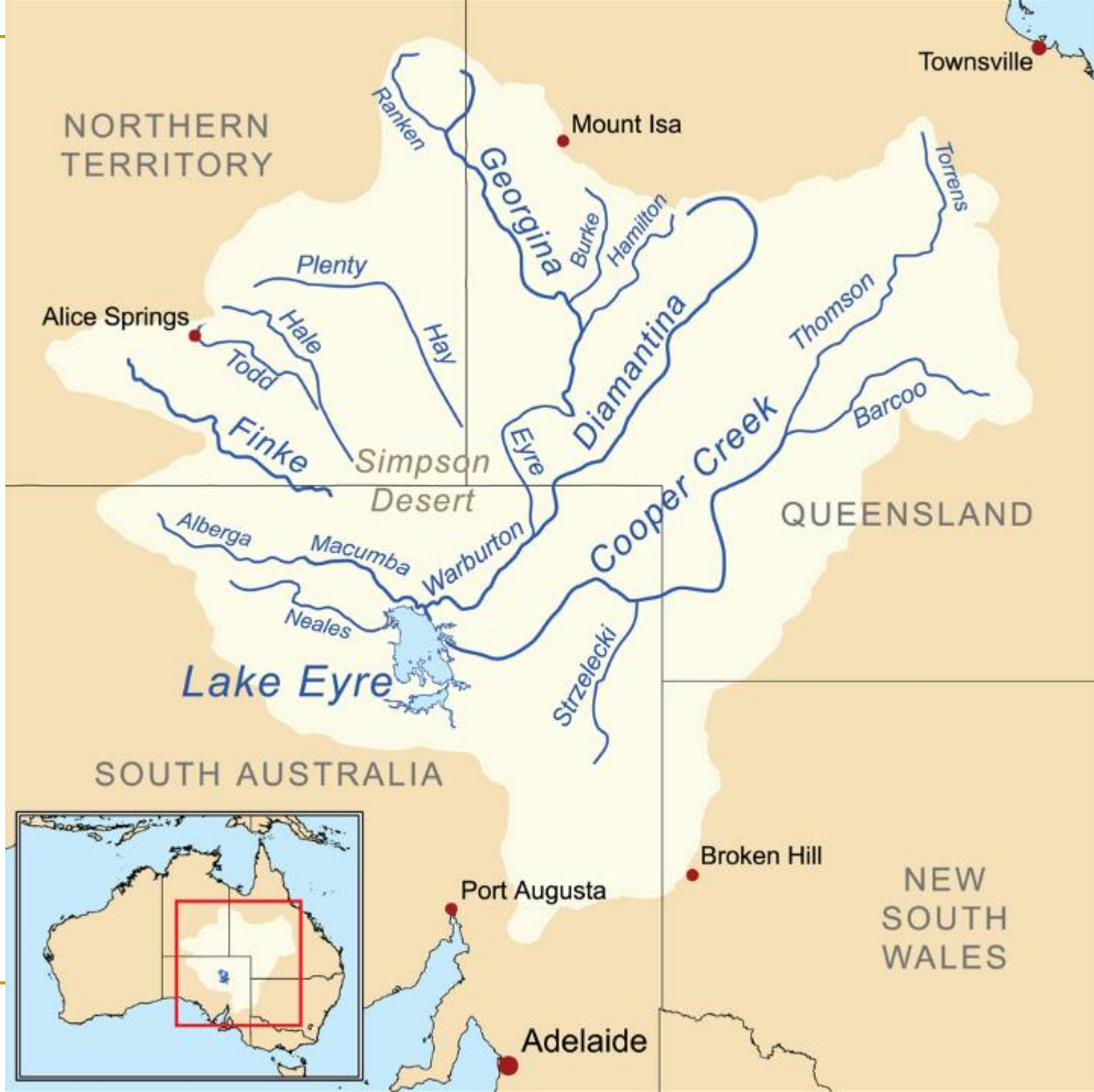
Language revitalisation

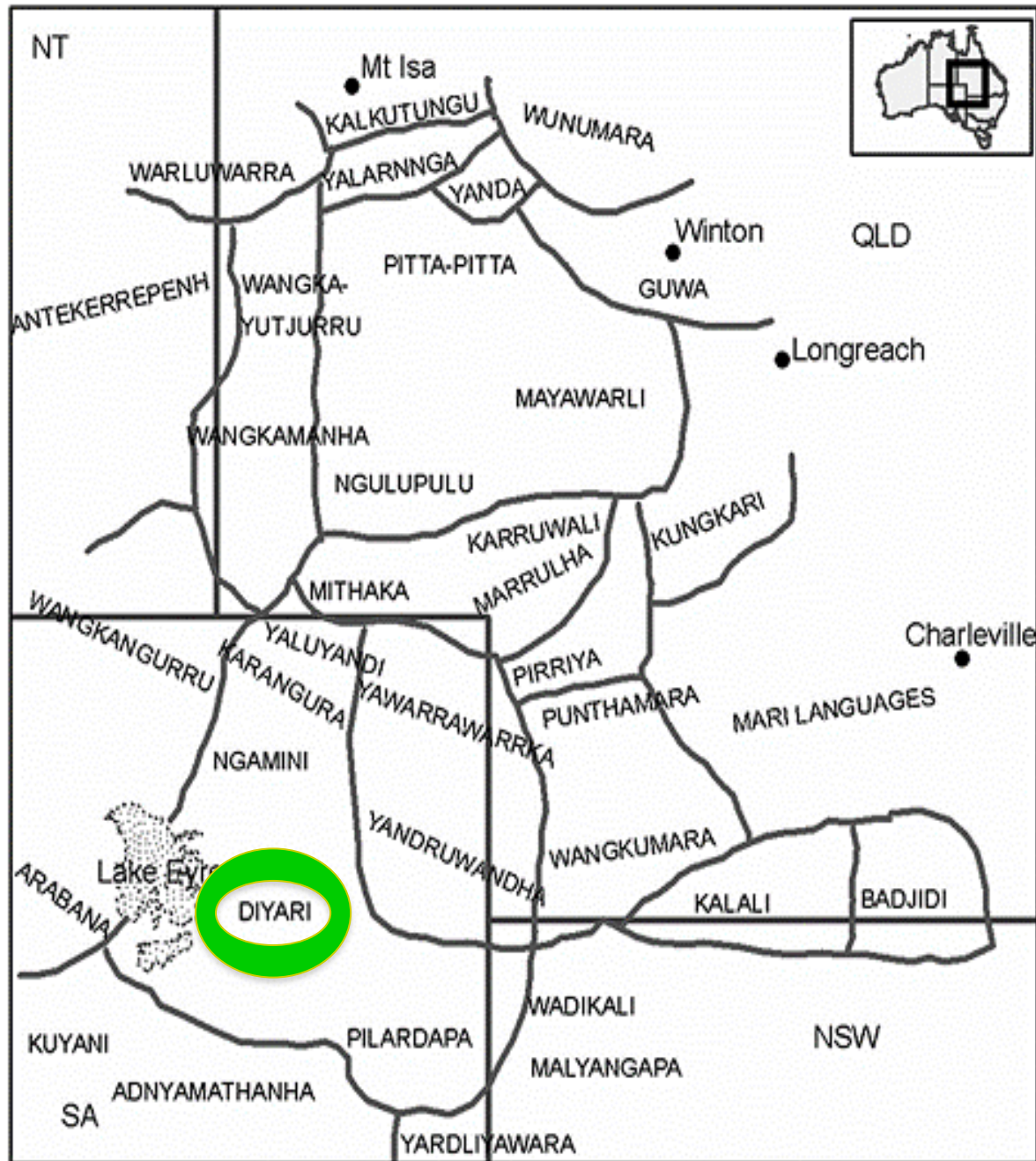
- 'reversing language shift' (Fishman 1991)
 - 'prior ideological clarification' (Fishman 1991, Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998, Roche 2020)
 - models:
 - Language landscape
 - Language nest
 - Master-apprentice
 - MLMTE
 - Immersion
 - support mechanisms:
 - tiny grants, e.g. FEL, ELF
 - for Australia, ILA grants (minor £15,000, medium £50,000, large £100,000)
-











The Dieri and missionaries

- Lutheran mission established by German missionaries in 1867
 - Missionaries learn Dieri language and prepare school books and religious materials
 - Literacy well established by 1880s
 - Mission attracts Aboriginal people from a wide area, offering a haven from incoming white colonists
 - Mission did well from 1890's to early 1900s
-

Bethesda Lutheran Mission, Killalpaninna, 1910



B 17097

Roxby Down Str.
Via Woomara West S.A.

22.5.1954

Mai Kamaneli Nganyaku Ted. Vogelrang
T fidri kara ngaruparala ngamai
ngakangundru pepa manila mai
Kamaneli wardaru fidri karari
maja tepi ja ngaiani prajana
tipe ja walkarli pinna ngamai
jinkanga ja jinkani toani ja kupani
wata mala jurangundru ngarana
wardaru jura prajana ja ngaiani
Gada jurakukananto mula ngaroni
kananiaku tepi ngamalkai fax
Ngaroni karati Roxby Down Str.
ngamai mankanaxi wendri waru
ngaiani jurangundru ngarana
wonti ngadani wata marla
ja ngaiani wata kuritarjai wardaru
ngaiani selalu ngarana wonti kilalpanina
mitani jakajai findri karari marla
ja marla pinaku panji ja ngaiani
wallis tikala ngamai Finnie Springs
Ataisa jeruja ngaiani paruparu wirarija
Ngankani wontitarjai ja wardaru

Diyari (Dieri) (1974-1978)

- 4th year undergraduate honours, introduced to 'moral research' approach and methods by Luise Hercus: individual-centred respect, qualitative dialogic interaction, joint construction of outcomes, co-authorships
 - PhD aimed at grammar production (slash and burn research model)
 - About 12 multilingual speakers who learned Diyari as children, in daily use in some families
 - Moved on to WA in 1978, USA in 1979
-

Social shifts from 1990

- 1992 Mabo decision overturns *terra nullius*
 - 1997 Diyari group lodges land claim
 - 2001 formation of Dieri Aboriginal Corporation
– 600 members in NSW & SA
 - May 2012 determination of native title to ancestral lands
 - 47,000 square kilometres (= 2 times Wales)
 - second Consent Determination 26th February 2014 added to this land
-

Native title May 2012 (lodged 1997)



Re-engagement – Dieri ILS project

- 2013 workshops: February Adelaide, March Port Augusta, April Adelaide, August Port Augusta
 - Materials development with teacher-linguist Greg Wilson – songs, bilingual dictionary, Willsden Primary school language programme
 - Blog dieriyawarra.wordpress.com
 - 95 posts, 39,000 page views (as of 2023-03-21), gets 100-200 views per week
 - Community inclusion and engagement process
-



March 2013 workshop, 4 generations



Writing songs



*ngapa-ngapa pirna ngariyi
ngarrimatha wakarayi
thalara pirna kurdayi
ngayanarni mithanhi
daku pirna thana
matya ngayana pankiyilha
ngapa pirna ngakayi
parru pirna pakarna*



Lots of water is coming down
A flood is coming
Lots of rain is falling
In our country
There are big sandhills
So we are happy now
Lots of water is flowing
And big fish (are coming) too

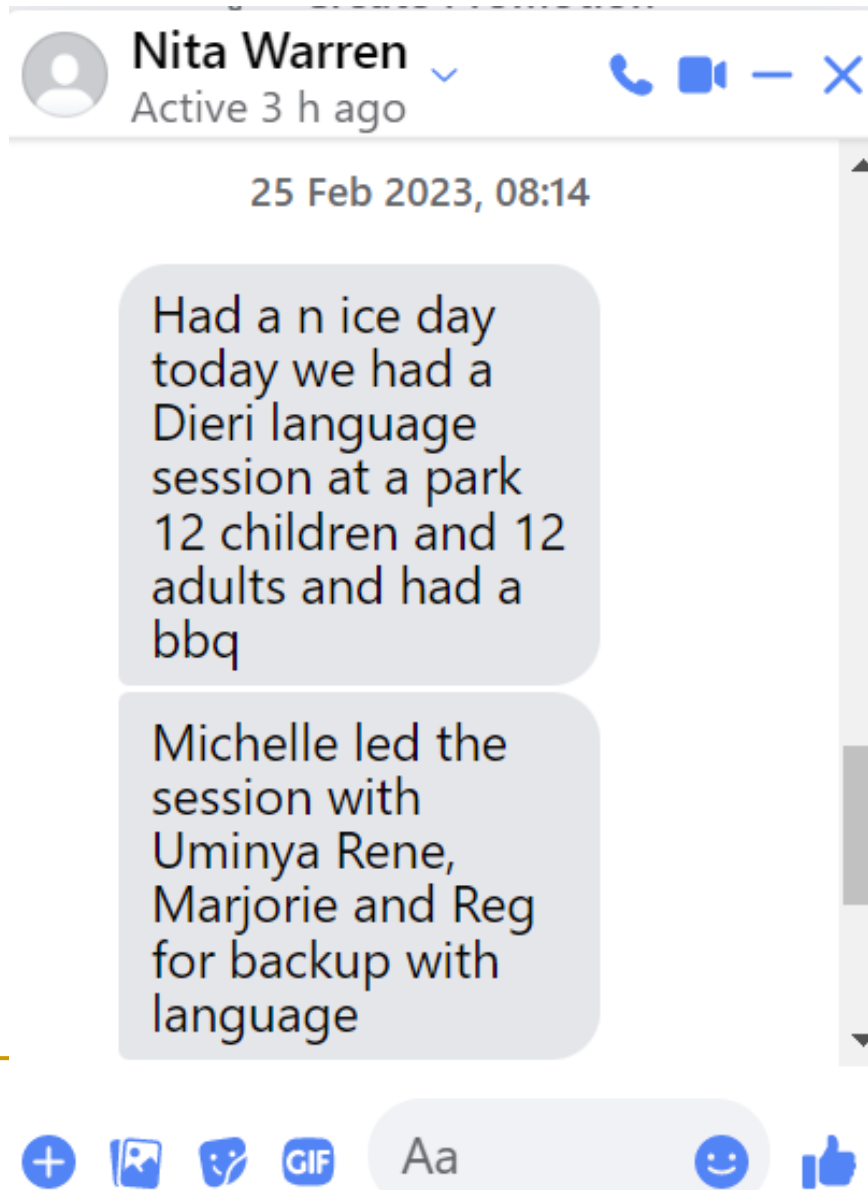
Methods

- Based on tracing connections back to people on the Lutheran mission that closed 1916 ('heritage')
 - Anchor for ways of speaking is one lady born in 1930 (granddaughter of my 1970s teacher) with all interested others contributing
 - Linguistic goal is creation of songs (new, translated) that iconically celebrate people-land
 - Process (workshops, meeting up, participation in events) is most important outcome, not exchange of denoting and predicating and producing 'stuff'
-

Trip to Dieri country (2022-12-07)

- DAC organized and funded trip to Killalpaninna
 - Multi-party team: 4 generations of Dieri, linguist, anthropologist, archaeologist, plant specialist, community development specialist, videographer
 - Goals and methods set by DAC participants – documenting plants and uses (culturally embedded), interviews as experientially-embedded conversations, youth engagement (research by?)
 - E.g. collecting *yawa* and making *tyaputyapu*
 - Video1 video2
-

Consequences (2023)



Consequences (2023)

- Indigenous Languages and the Arts (ILA) grant scheme (opens 5th February, closes 22nd March)
 - Three levels: £15,000, £50,000, £100,000
 - Must be lodged by registered Aboriginal organization – DAC
 - 30 page application form, wanting quantitative history and predictions of “engagement” and “outputs”, cf. Dobrin, Austin & Nathan 2009
-

ILA form

Project title: *

Please provide a brief description of your project that would be suitable to promote your project publicly. The description should include who, what, where and when. Examples of public project descriptions for approved projects are available on the Department's [website](#).

Brief project description *

Word count:

Must be no more than 50 words

Please provide a detailed description of the project, including how it will be delivered, and clearly state the high-level outcomes that will be achieved (e.g. film, language dictionary, no. of people involved in workshop, language app, theatre/dance performance, trained language workers etc.) *

Word count:

Must be no more than 300 words.

ILA form

Which description best fits the current state of this language? *

Please describe any previous revival and/or maintenance activity that has been undertaken and any language resources (e.g. dictionaries) that have been developed.

You should list any activity or resource that has been undertaken on the Language by any group, not just work your particular organisation has undertaken.

Previous revival / maintenance activity undertaken *

Resources developed

- Grammar and/or word list
- Audio recordings/transcriptions
- Archival database or materials (online or physical)
- Online language learning resources (i.e. app or web platform)
- Learning and teaching resources (i.e. posters, flashcards, board games)
- Children's book(s)/story collection(s)/song book(s)
- Other (please list below)

Application?

- ILA orientation is to industrial scale revitalisation whereas Dieri need bespoke cottage industry
 - agreed not to apply but that language bbq will continue, and be extended to Broken Hill (NSW) as grassroots, small scale activity
 - community survey of 1,500 DAC members
 - podcast series created on Spotify to support oral versions of blog posts (online models for pronunciation)
 - plan to approach mining companies to fund language and culture resource creation, including online multimedia for mobile devices
-

What have I learnt in 50 years?

- Revitalisation work involves substantial challenges, including personal, academic, technical, social, and political
 - It is easy to fall into simplistic “solutions” that do not work, either linguistically or socio-politically (see Wilkins 2000, Amery 2009)
 - Be ready to listen and try to understand what people mean by what they say
 - Leave your own politics/preconceptions at the door
 - Look for solutions and sustainable outcomes through open and equitable ongoing discussions in a realistic context
-

What did I learn?

- Develop concrete outcomes but be careful not to promise too much and raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled and that will lead to disappointment
 - Sometimes you just need to shut up and be patient – timing and personalities can be the most important variables
 - Be even more patient 😊
 - Thank you!
-

References

Amery, Rob. 2009. Phoenix or Relic? Documentation of Languages with Revitalization in Mind. *Language Documentation & Conservation* 3(2): 138-148.

Austin, Peter K. 2014. And still they speak Diyari: the life history of an endangered language. *Ethnorema* 10, 1-17.

Dauenhauer, Nora Marks & Richard Dauenhauer. 1998. Technical, Emotional, and Ideological Issues in Reversing Language Shift: Examples from Southeast Alaska. In Lenore Grenoble & Lindsay Whaley (eds.) *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response*, 57-98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Dobrin, Lise, Peter K. Austin & David Nathan. 2009. Dying to be counted: the commodification of endangered languages in language documentation. *Language Documentation and Description* 6, 37-52.

References

Fishman, Joshua. 1991. *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*.

Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

Roche, Gerald. 2020. Does Ideological Clarification Help Language Maintenance? Exploring the Revitalization Paradox through the Case of Manegacha, a Tibetan Minority Language. *Anthropological Linguistics* 61(1):1-21.

Wilkins, David P. 2000. Even with the best of intentions ... : Some Pitfalls in the Fight for Linguistic and Cultural Survival (One view of the Australian Experience) in Francisco Queixalos & O. Renault-Lescure (eds.) *As linguas amazônicas hoje / Les langues d'Amazonie aujourd'hui*. Coédition IRD/ISA/MPEG
