

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Public

Organisation

Aboriginal Resource & Development Services Aboriginal Corporation

Short submission (text box 500 words or less)

North-east Arnhem Land covers around 32,000 m², includes six major communities, and is home to the Yolu people. It is a distinctive part of Australia with a rich cultural heritage. Unlike many other Indigenous communities in Australia, the Yolu have retained strong knowledge of their cultural traditions. While most Yolu people understand this traditional knowledge, deeper knowledge is held mainly by older generations and of the 30+ Yolu languages, the majority are not being spoken by the younger generation.

Yolu leaders and Yolu organisations consistently express concern about code-switching, or language mixing, and the broader shift from ancestral clan languages to lingua franca languages.

There is strong ongoing interest in recording elders' language and knowledge to address communication and comprehension challenges in critical settings such as courts and hospitals, and to provide training for Yolu people who undertake highly skilled language work as part of their roles. There is also strong interest in celebrating and showcasing the richness of Yolu languages and ways of being.

There is a strong interest in Yolu communities in working to document, maintain and revitalise valuable cultural knowledge before elders pass away, and to celebrate the cultural riches that all ages still maintain.

As Yolu young people become more engaged in mainstream cultural practices, the gap between them and their elders can widen. Many have observed the emergence of a youth subculture that has contributed to antisocial behaviour and reduced respect for elders and for traditions that have guided Yolu life for thousands of years.

Addressing these changes requires ongoing government focus and funding to recognise older generations as valuable holders of traditional knowledge, to invest in emerging Yolu leaders and to support Aboriginal controlled organisations that record and make this knowledge accessible.

The Aboriginal Resource Development Service Aboriginal Corporation (ARDS) Yolu Language Centre supports the ongoing recording and preservation of Yolu Matha languages, songs, and stories, and seeks a commitment to sufficient funding to continue this work, including archiving of materials and broadcasting appropriate recordings on Yolu Radio. Our team supports local language custodians in keeping language strong. This includes through intergenerational language transmission activities, resource development, language documentation, translation, training and language advocacy.

ARDS is a Yolu led cross-cultural specialist organisation that has operated across Northeast Arnhem Land communities and homelands for the past 50 years.

ARDS' purpose is to increase Yolu control of all aspects of Yolu life through equal and genuine access to information, resources and decision-making. ARDS Aboriginal Corporation seeks inclusion in the Government's cultural policy, a recognition of the strong link between language and music/songs and culture and the importance of investing in the immediate preservation of language because the holders of much of that knowledge grow older every day.