And still they speak Diyari: the life history of an endangered language

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SOMMARIO

La lingua diyari era parlata tradizionalmente nell'estremo nord dello stato della South Australia, ed ha una storia interessante e complessa nota fin dal 1860, quando venne conosciuta per la prima volta da non aborigeni. Fu utilizzata per attività missionarie luterane dal 1867 al 1914, che portarono allo sviluppo di un suo uso scritto ed alla produzione di testi redatti da parlanti nativi. Ma la sua vitalità venne gravemente colpita dalla chiusura della missione nel 1914. La ricerca linguistica è iniziata nel 1960, e questa lingua è relativamente ben documentata con testi e registrazioni audio. Dal 1990 attività sociali e culturali della comunità hanno prodotto un interesse crescente per il diyari, e una serie di iniziative miranti alla sua rivitalizzazione sono state avviate a partire dal 2008. Diversamente da quanto scritto da alcuni, questa lingua non è estinta, ed ha attualmente diversi parlanti che la parlano con diversi gradi di competenza. Un attivo gruppo di componenti della comunità diyari nutre un forte interesse per la sua conservazione e la sua ripresa.

Keywords: *endangered language, language revitalisation, Australian Aboriginal languages, Diyari, South Australia*

ISO 639-3 code: dif

1. Introduction[1]

According to the sixteenth edition of the online language listing *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009)[2], the Diyari language[3] (ISO 639-3 code dif) that was traditionally spoken in the far north of South Australia (see Map 1 below) is categorized as 'extinct' and 'the language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language'[4]. In other words, according to this often-quoted source, there is no-one who even associates themselves with the language name, let alone has any knowledge of it. This categorisation is in fact incorrect, and there are today a number of people living today in South Australia and western New South Wales who grew up speaking Diyari as their first language and whose knowledge and linguistic ability ranges from fluent native speaker to semi-speaker to partial speaker. There are hundreds of people who know at least some words and expressions in Diyari (though perhaps without productive grammatical knowledge) and a large group of young people who identify themselves as Dieri and are keen to learn about the language and their culture, history and heritage.

In this paper we explore the history of documentation of the Diyari language, and changes in its ethnolinguistic status over the past 150 years since the time of first contact and the present day between Diyari speakers and the colonisers who occupied their traditional lands. The goal of this paper is not only to present a remarkable story of language survival (Diyari is today the easternmost Aboriginal language in the southern half of Australia that has first language speakers who learnt it as children; all other languages further (south-)east in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria do not – see Wafer and Lissarrague 2008 for details for New South Wales) but also to contribute to what Austin and Sallabank (2014) call 'meta-documentation of language revitalisation' through a case study of the background and impetus for Diyari language revival efforts (see Section 6). The details of the actual revitalisation models, processes and resources employed and an evaluation of the results to date, including

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[2] See http://archive.ethnologue.com/16/show_language.asp?code=dif [accessed 2015-01-03].

[3] We spell the language name as Diyari (see Austin 1981, 2013 for discussion). Other spellings in the literature are Dieri, Diari, Dieyerie and variants thereof. The community preference for the name of the group is Dieri and hence the political body is named the Dieri Aboriginal Corporation (see further below).

[4] The current seventeenth edition (Lewis et al 2014) updates this on the basis of feedback from my research to 'nearly extinct – the only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language'. As we show below, this updated language vitality classification is still inaccurate.

community engagement and the impact on speaker fluency levels, can be found in a companion paper (Austin 2015).

2. Earliest records

The traditional lands of Diyari speakers lie along the lower reaches of Cooper Creek to the east of Lake Eyre in the far north of South Australia; it is one of a group of related languages classified as 'Karnic' in the linguistic literature (Austin 1990; Bowern 2001, 2009; Breen 2007, 2011). Figure 1, from Breen 2007, shows the approximate location of Diyari and neighbouring languages (solid lines enclose genetically-defined language subgroups) at the time of first contact with non-Aboriginal explorers and settlers in about 1860.

Figure 1: Approximate location of Diyari and neighbouring languages
(from Breen 2007: 177)
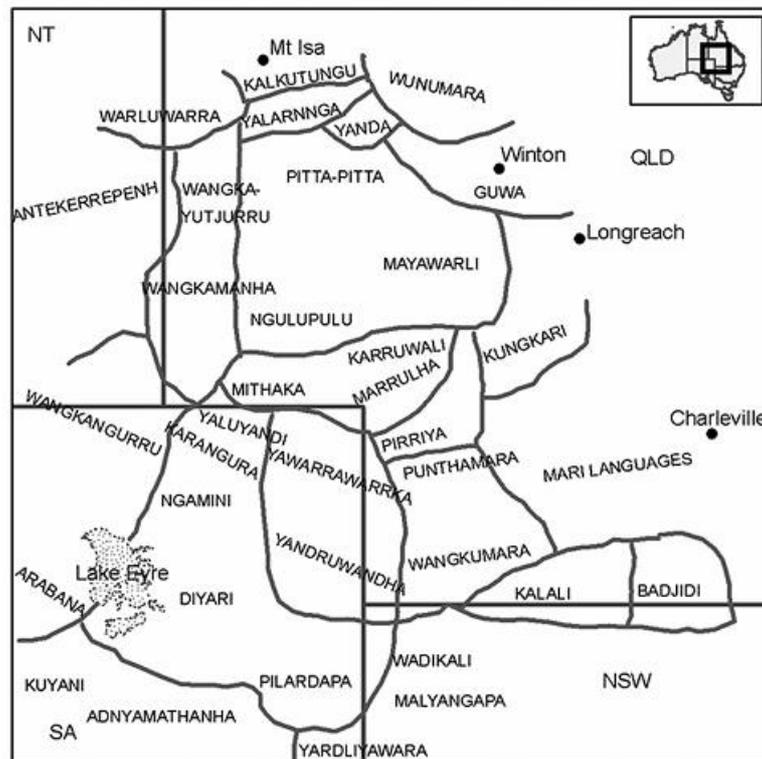
The earliest written records of the Diyari language that have survived are a pedagogical and religious book by Lutheran missionaries Koch and Homann (1870) that includes a list of orthographic symbols, and sample syllables, words, and sentences plus short translations from German of the Lutheran catechism and hymns. The missionaries started learning the language when the Bethesda mission was established in 1867 at Killalpaninna on Cooper Creek in accordance with the teachings of leading Lutheran figure Pastor Ludwig Harms (Stevens 1994: 15, 203). They were using Diyari in the mission school that was established in 1868 (when twenty-two pupils were enrolled) and in their religious work (Stevens 1994: 204, see also Proeve

and Proeve 1945, Jones and Sutton 1986). In 1872-73 missionary Karl Schoknecht compiled a Diyari-German and German-Diyari dictionary and a grammar sketch (unpublished, and later translated into English by his son, see Schoknecht 1947) that demonstrates familiarity with the structure of the language, though the orthography is under-differentiated in certain crucial respects (such as the confusion of velar *ng* and alveolar *n*, especially in word-initial position – see Austin 1986a, 2013: 240). The foundations of literacy in Diyari were established during this period (as Stevens (1994: 206) notes, the missionaries reported in 1876 that 'some pupils were able to read fairly well'), and this was further enhanced and extended when missionary Johannes Flierl revised the orthography and wrote a detailed grammar during his period at the mission from 1878 to 1884. Flierl 1880 is a translation of the Lutheran catechism and epistles and gospels from German into Diyari in the new orthography, and was widely used on the growing mission settlement (to which neighbouring Aboriginal groups were attracted, including the Wangkangurru from the Simpson Desert hundreds of kilometers north-west of Cooper Creek). During this period Diyari became a lingua franca, widely used by European missionaries and lay helpers, and by Aboriginal people alike[5].

There is evidence from letters written in Diyari by native speakers to mission authorities around this time (Stevens 1994: 207, 280) that literacy in the language, and also in English, was well established in the 1880s. Indeed, writing in Diyari by speakers continued until the 1960s at least (see Section 3 below). During the 1890s the Aboriginal population on the mission grew as they sought sanctuary and food there as well as 'cultural "gifts", compassion and direction (relative to other encounters with Europeans) – enabling them to cope with the imposed national cultural changes and decrees' (Stevens 1994: 208-209). The growing mission community is shown in photographs in the Lutheran archives such as Figure 2 which was taken at the wedding of one of the lay helper's daughters in 1910 (see also photographs in Stevens 1994: 141, 148, 155, 183).

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[5] Note that all of the primary language consultants with whom I worked in the 1970s did not identify as members of the Diyari group, but as Wangkangurru or Arabana (Austin 2013: 24).

Figure 2: Photograph of wedding of Hermann H. Vogelsang's daughter, Dora (Mrs Paschke) at Bethesda Lutheran Mission, Killalpaninna, 1910

There were further missionary records and publications in Diyari during this time, including the 600 page translation of the New Testament by Reuther and Strehlow 1897 (the first complete translation into any Australian Aboriginal language), and Reuther's monumental 13 volume manuscript of linguistic and cultural materials begun in 1899 and completed in 1906 (published in English translation by Scherer as Reuther 1981). Reuther's successor Reidel did further work on the language from 1907 to 1914, and translated the Old Testament into Diyari, however his 381 page manuscript was not published as the mission settlement was closed by the South Australian government at the outbreak of the First World War (see Stevens (1994: 231-237) for details). Reidel made a number of orthographic changes to Diyari spelling, including recognition of the contrast between trill *rr* and continuant *r*, replacement of allophonic and phonetically predictable *e* and *o* by their phonemic base *a*, and clarification of various consonant clusters (recognizing a contrast between *nk* and *ngk* for example – see Austin 1986a: 177, Stevens 1994:212). None of these developments however made their way into general usage and the most widely used mission orthography established by Flierl in the 1880s (and followed by all subsequent missionaries including Reuther) was the one used by native speakers to write in Diyari, a topic to which we turn in Section 3.

Following the closure of the mission on Cooper Creek and the departure of the missionaries, most of the Aboriginal population relocated to towns and stations to the south and outside Diyari traditional territory and with mixed populations, such as Marree, Lyndhurst, Wire Yard, Mulka, Finnis Springs, Muloorina, Murnpeowie and Mundowdna, and also further east to Broken Hill in New South Wales. From this time

onwards there was increasing use of English, and reduction in the use of Diyari, especially where people were living on settlements dominated by other groups (such as Arabana at Finnis Springs). What had been a cohesive speech community of many hundreds of people up to 1914 was now shattered into isolated groups and families living together with other non-Diyari speaking people.

3. Aboriginal writing in Diyari

As noted above, Aboriginal literacy in Diyari began in the 1870s and was established by the 1880s, being promoted by several subsequent generations of missionaries[6]. There exist in the Lutheran Archive collection a number of letters written in Diyari to mission authorities, probably at the urging of the local missionaries (Stevens 1994: 280). Further materials include eight postcards in Diyari written by Rebecca Maltilina[7] to Dorothea Ruediger, the daughter of one of the missionaries, between 1909 and 1913. These are discussed in detail and translated into English in Austin 1986a. As Austin (1986a: 179) notes: 'the language of the cards is identical to the language of the conversational texts recorded from present day speakers'. The orthography used on the cards is the standard mission spelling that was current at the time.

The persistence of literacy after the mission closed is evidenced by Fry 1937a,b, which are two collections of texts provided by Sam Dintibana Kinjmilina who had grown up on the Lutheran mission. Fry reports leaving a blank exercise book with Sam who was living at Mirra Mitta the far north of South Australia, and 'two months later the book arrived [in Adelaide] with the following legends written by Sam in the Dieri language … As Sam wrote the Dieri himself, a word for word transcription has been made although the spelling is not consistent' (Fry 1937b: 271). There are indeed many errors in the materials published by Fry, however, as Austin (1986a: 178) notes: 'it is not clear how many of these are genuine mis-spellings by Dintibana and how many are transcribers' and typesetters' errors. It would be interesting to analyse the original materials if the notebook mentioned by Fry can be found'. Unfortunately, thorough searches of the South Australian Museum Archives have not to date been able to locate the original notebook.

The final piece of evidence of native-speaker Diyari literacy comes from a collection of letters written by various former residents of the Lutheran mission in the 1950s and 1960s to Theodore ('Ted') Vogelsang, son of the mission lay helper Hermann Vogelsang[8]. Both Vogelsangs were evidently fluent in Diyari and used it regularly in their work on the mission farm; after his retirement Ted Vogelsang was associated with the South Australian Museum in Adelaide and collaborated with the linguist Ronald Berndt on recording Diyari language materials (Berndt and Vogelsang 1938-41, Berndt 1953 – see Austin 1986a: 178 for discussion). A number of these letters were written by Ben Murray who became my language teacher in 1974 and whose biography was published by Austin, Hercus and Jones 1988. Figure 3 presents an example of these letters from May 1954; it was written by Alick Edwards (see

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[6] Stevens (1994: 211) mentions that in 1909 'Reidel corresponded with Reuther partly in Diyari and partly in German, and like a select club the two were rare communicators in a written Aboriginal language'.
[7] Her photograph can be found in Stevens (1994: 247).
[8] I am grateful to Ronald Berndt for showing these letters to me in 1978.

Section 4) in the established mission orthography and is structurally identical to other Diyari language materials.

Figure 3: Letter in Diyari by Alick Edwards
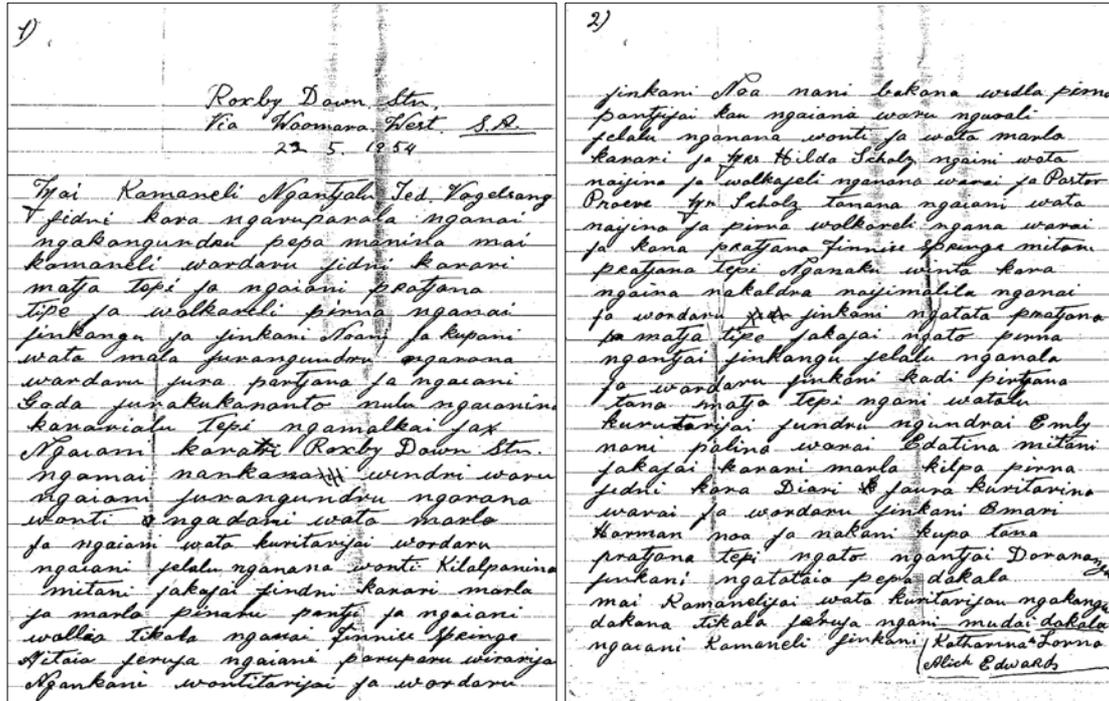
4. Linguistic research

The first research by professional linguists on Diyari was that of Ken Hale who recorded a short text in 1960 from Johannes, a native speaker who told Hale he was 'born 90 miles north of Marree' and who was living at the time in Alice Springs. Hale did not do any other investigation of Diyari apart from recording this sample text. The phonetician David Trefry carried out research on Diyari between 1968 and 1970 which included making audio recordings of a number of speakers repeating a fixed set of vocabulary items, the phonetic and phonological analysis of which was presented in a short article (Trefry 1970), and his in PhD thesis (Trefry 1974, published as Trefry 1984). As Hercus 1971 notes, Trefry (1970) shows a number of misanalyses of Diyari phonology (see also Austin 2013: 245), however the PhD dissertation (Trefry 1974) contains some useful acoustic information. The consultants Trefry recorded were living in Port Augusta and Marree.

Between 1968 and 1972 Luise Hercus recorded six tapes of interviews in Diyari with Alick Edwards who had grown up on the Lutheran mission and was then living in a retirement home in Port Augusta, and with Ben Murray, who had moved to the mission in 1908 and worked there as camel driver until 1914 (Austin, Hercus and Jones 1988). At the time of Hercus' interviews he was living in Farina, a ghost town south of Marree, or visiting Witchelina station. In 1973 Hercus passed her recordings to me, and in 1974 I accompanied her on two fieldtrips to South Australia to collect Diyari data for my BA Honours thesis at the Australian National University. From 1975 to 1977 I did further fieldwork, mostly in Port Augusta and Marree, recording

the remaining fluent speakers living there – my PhD thesis on the grammatical structure of Diyari was completed in 1978 and a revised version was published as Austin (1981). I recorded approximately 50 hours of interviews with Diyari speakers, including elicitation and translation from English, narrative texts, one mythological text, and a number of songs, including traditional *kunarri* songs from Cooper Creek sung by Leslie Russell, and Lutheran hymns in Diyari sung by Selma Thompson[9]. At that time, the language was in daily use among a small number of families, especially by Frieda Merrick and her daughters Gertie and Suzie who lived in Marree, however most people younger than 50 had English as their primary language. During the 1980s I continued my research on Diyari, though without any new fieldwork, and published translated texts (Austin 1986a, b, c; Austin and Murray 1981), notes on literacy (Austin 1986a) and deixis (Austin 1982), and co-authored Ben Murray's biography (Austin, Hercus and Jones 1988). My last publications on Diyari at this time were on language classification (Austin 1990) and vocabulary (Austin 1993), and my primary field-based research focus moved to northern Western Australia and the Mantharta and Kanyara groups of languages.

The main language consultants with whom I had worked had all passed away by 1995 (Leslie Russell in 1975, Frieda Merrick in 1978, Rosa Warren in 1985 and Ben Murray in 1994) and I assumed at this time that there were no longer any fluent speakers of Diyari alive and that the language was virtually extinct. However, significant social changes that began to take place around this time later proved that this impression was incorrect. It is to these developments that we now turn.

5. Social developments from 1990

The 1990s saw the instigation of social and political activity by Aboriginal groups in this area in connection with claims for unalienated crown land under the *Native Title Act 1993*, and activities of mining companies such as Western Mining Corporation. A group called the Dieri Mitha Council was established in 1992 (led by Raelene Warren, niece of Ben Murray) and the following years saw disputes between this group, an Arabana organization, and others. In 1997 a group identifying itself as Dieri and associated with Edward Landers lodged a native title claim to traditional lands east of Lake Eyre; this group was incorporated in 2001 as the Diari Aboriginal Corporation (DAC) and is registered with the Australian Government Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (Number 3890).[10] It has 600 identified members living in Marree, Lyndhurst, Port Augusta, and Whyalla in South Australia and in Broken Hill in New South Wales. In 2008 DAC purchased Marree Station and camp ground, surrounding the township of Marree, taking possession of the property in a symbolic handover at dawn on 20th September 2008. In 2009 DAC began discussions with Santos Mining concerning oil and gas exploration on their traditional lands and in 2011 signed a formal cultural heritage management agreement with Santos 'recognising the significance of traditional owners in the management and protection of cultural heritage in the Dieri native title claim area of the Cooper Basin'.[11] Similar cultural heritage management arrangements have also been negotiated with Beach Energy.

[9] These hymns are identical to ones found in the Lutheran missionary materials.
[10] See www.nativetitle.org.au/PDFs/SA_TheDieri.pdf [accessed 2015-01-04]
[11] See www.santos.com/blog/archive/2011/07/31/Dieriagreement.aspx [accessed 2015-01-04]

The following year on 1ˢᵗ May 2012 the Federal Court of Australia handed down its Consent Determination 427 in the case of *Landers versus South Australia* awarding ownership to DAC of some 47,000 square kilometres of land, centered along Cooper Creek and with part of its south-eastern boundary extending into the Strzelecki Regional Reserve and part of its western boundary extending into the Lake Eyre National Park (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Consent Determination for Dieri lands
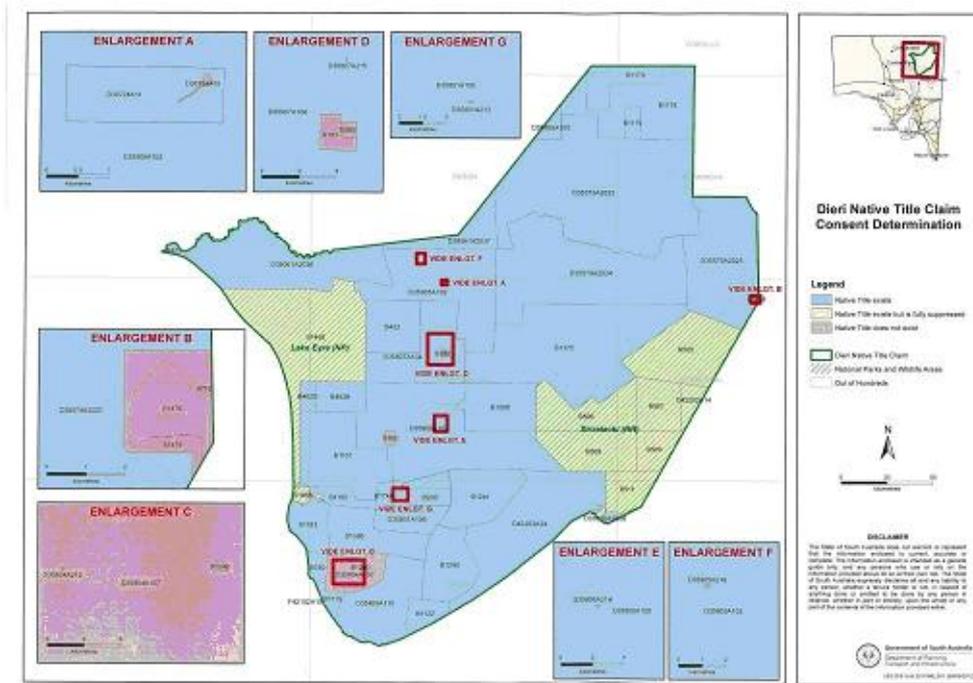
The ceremonial receipt of the consent determination by DAC leaders Shane Kemp and Frank Warren is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Ceremonial handover of the Native Title Consent Determination, Marree 2012

A second consent determination (Dieri No. 2 Native Title Claim and State of South Australia [2014] FCA 125) was awarded on 26th February 2014.

Since its formation, the DAC has been concerned about maintenance and propagation of cultural and linguistic heritage, and in 2008 began a collaboration between its Dieri Resources Development Group, based in Port Augusta, and Greg Wilson of the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services to develop Diyari language pedagogical materials. Through a series of workshops and language recording sessions this resulted in a print resource and CD-ROM called *Dieri Yawarra* (Wilson 2010), a set of 15 interactive components introducing learners to Diyari vocabulary and grammar, such as *Ngakarni palku* 'my body' or *Karnaya putu* 'people's things'. The print resource uses a practical orthography based on the phonological analysis of Austin (1981) and the representation used in my later publications (listed in Section 4) which have digraphs in place of the earlier linguistic symbols (but with some changes, such as *ty* for the lamino-palatal instead of *j*, *r* for the apico-domal continuant and *rr* for the alveolar trill rather than *r* and *rrh*, respectively). Basic aspects of Diyari grammar such as the system of ergative case-marking are presented and explained. The CD-ROM contains a set of interactive tasks and includes audio recordings made with a number of people living in Port Augusta and Whyalla, with the main goal being, as the cover indicates: 'for community and school language revitalisation and second language learning'.

Figure 6. The Dieri Yawarra print resource (Wilson 2010)
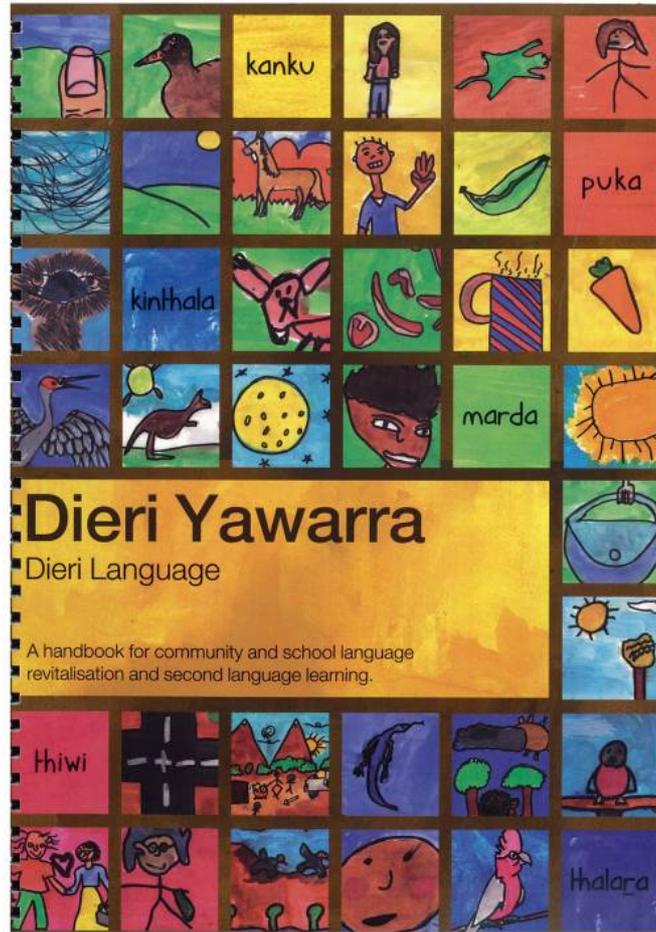
Copies of the booklet and CD-ROM were distributed by DAC to its members. Greg Wilson (p.c.) reports that collection of materials for the *Dieri Yawarra* project required a great deal of time and that many of the people identified by DAC as speakers struggled to remember words and sentences in Diyari after years of disuse and lack of practice. It appeared then that all that remained were a number of 'semi-speakers' or 'rememberers' of the language (Grinevald and Bert 2011), but no-one with conversational fluency or ability to record even short narratives.

In 2009 Greg Wilson and the DAC Dieri Resources Development Group began a more ambitious project called *Ngayana Dieri Yawarra Yathayilha!* ('Let us all speak the Dieri language now!') to develop language lessons for primary and secondary schools using a model that Wilson had previously employed for writing curriculum materials for the Arabana language (not closely related to Diyari and traditionally spoken to the west of Lake Eyre). In the process he recorded over 2,000 sound files, mostly vocabulary and simple sentences, and prepared graded lessons dealing with grammatical topics, plus Powerpoint shows for school use. So far this project exists in draft form (Wilson 2013) and has not yet been published.

In August 2010 I was in Australia on sabbatical leave and Greg Wilson invited me to travel with him to Port Augusta to meet the Dieri Resources Development Group and observe them working on the *Ngayana Dieri Yawarra Yathayilha!* project. Members of the group included Rene Warren (born around 1930 and the

granddaughter of Frieda Merrick, one of my main language consultants in the 1970s) and her son Reg Warren (born in 1952), who normally lives and works in a mining town in the far north of Western Australia. After several hours of informal interaction during which I spoke in Diyari with the group, I was able to record with Rene Warren a short conversation and narrative about how she and her brother used to look after goats when they were children. This demonstrated that she has a high level of fluency in the language, although she has little opportunity to use it regularly. Structurally, her knowledge of Diyari shows no apparent differences from the grammatical system of the speakers with whom I worked 35 years ago, including the complex system of cross-clausal switch-reference and morphological encoding of ergativity and categories such as 'action done for the benefit of someone other than the subject' (see Austin 1981)[12]. Reg Warren can best be described as a 'semi-speaker': he can understand and translate everything that his mother says in Diyari and can contribute words and short sentences to conversations, but lacks confidence when asked to translate from English and occasionally makes lexical or grammatical mistakes when he attempts to do so[13]. A number of other older DAC members also appear to be semi-speakers, while those in the Warren family younger than Reg have more restricted fluency and speak Diyari with a marked English-influenced pronunciation.

6. Towards language revitalisation

Following this meeting in August 2010, the DAC Dieri Resources Development Group decided to apply for an Indigenous Languages Support grant from the Australian Office of the Arts to undertake language revitalisation activities. The grant was awarded in July 2012 and in October 2012 the group invited Greg Wilson (now free-lance) and myself to collaborate with them on the project. Funds from the grant enabled me to buy out of my teaching at SOAS and to take paid leave for January to April 2013 in Australia. I was based at the National Dictionary Centre at the Australian National University and travelled to Adelaide and Port Augusta in February, March and April 2013 to run language revitalisation workshops with Greg and the DAC Group (a further workshop was held in August 2013 when I was again able to visit Australia). These workshops focused on practical hands-on language learning activities, with participants building on their knowledge of Diyari vocabulary and extending it by adding grammatical structures, such as pronominals, verb inflections and noun case-endings. Each workshop was attended by 50-60 DAC members, some of whom had travelled for 5-6 hours from as far away as Broken Hill or Marree to participate. One particularly popular activity was song writing, especially translation of English lyrics for country and western songs into Diyari – these were then learnt and practised by the group. A particular favourite was 'Folsom Prison Blues' by Johnny Cash that was translated in full by the group; the first verse is as follows[14]:

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[12] The only major observable difference is that Rene and Reg Warren use *wirdirdi* for 'where' while earlier speakers (including those represented in the missionary materials) used *wardayari* or *wardari*.

[13] Reg has worked in the mining industry in Western Australia for the past 30 years and hence has little opportunity to make use of his knowledge of Diyari.

[14] For explanation and a sound file see https://dieriyawarra.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/folsom-prisonanhi/; the second verse is presented at https://dieriyawarra.wordpress.com/2013/04/23/folsom-prison-mandru/ and for the third verse see https://dieriyawarra.wordpress.com/2013/08/04/folsom-prison-parkulu/ [all accessed 2015-01-04].

Ngathu	traina	nga̱rayi	yara	waka̱rarnanhi
Ngathu	wata	dityi	nhayirna	warayi
Jailanhi	nganha	kurrarna	Folsom	Prisonanhi
Ya	traina	wapayilha	San	Antonaya

The following is a grammatical analysis and free translation of each verse[15]:

| Ngathu | traina | nga̱ra-yi | yara | waka̱ra-rnanhi |
| 1sg.erg | train | hear-pres | towards speaker | come-imperfDS |

'I hear the train coming towards me'

| Ngathu | wata | dityi | nhayi-rna | warayi |
| 1sg.erg | not | sun | see-ptcple | aux |

'I did not see the sun'

| Jaila-nhi | nganha | kurra-rna | Folsom | Prisona-nhi |
| jail-loc | 1sg.acc | put-ptcple | Folsom | Prison-loc |

'(They) put me in Folsom Prison jail'

| Ya | traina | wapa-yi-lha | San | Antona-ya |
| and | train | go-pres-newinf | San | Antone-allat |

'And the train is now going to San Antone'

Also in 2013, Willsden Primary School in Port Augusta (which has a majority Aboriginal population) decided to introduce a Diyari language programme; Patricia Waye-Hill (niece of Reg Warren) was given responsibility for planning lessons and developing support materials for this initiative, and was able to engage Marjorie Warren (Reg Warren's sister) as the key teacher, drawing on relevant revitalisation workshop materials and discussions with her grandmother in so doing.

In order to support these revitalisation activities I revised my 1981 Diyari grammar using the new practical orthography and made it available free online as Austin (2013). I also drafted a Diyari-English basic dictionary with English-Diyari finderlist and listing in semantic fields using the LexiquePro software, and made this available free online as well. I also decided to experiment with using an online blog (at www.dieriyawarra.wordpress.com) to distribute information about the ILS revitalisation project and activities as well as to present basic language lessons (on pronunciation, vocabulary, morphology, and grammatical structures), some language games (including sound files), and conversational routines such as greetings and interactions (with cartoons to illustrate their use). The blog has proved to be popular both among DAC members but also with an international online audience, and the 72 posts written during February 2013 and July 2014 have so far attracted 8,600 visits, averaging 10-15 per day. Figure 7 shows a screen shot of one posting on the Diyari language blog.

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[15] Abbreviations used in the glossing are: acc – accusative case; allat – allative case; erg – ergative case; imperfDS – imperfective different subject; loc – locative case; newinf – new information; pres – present tense; ptcple – participial.

Figure 7. The Diyari language blog
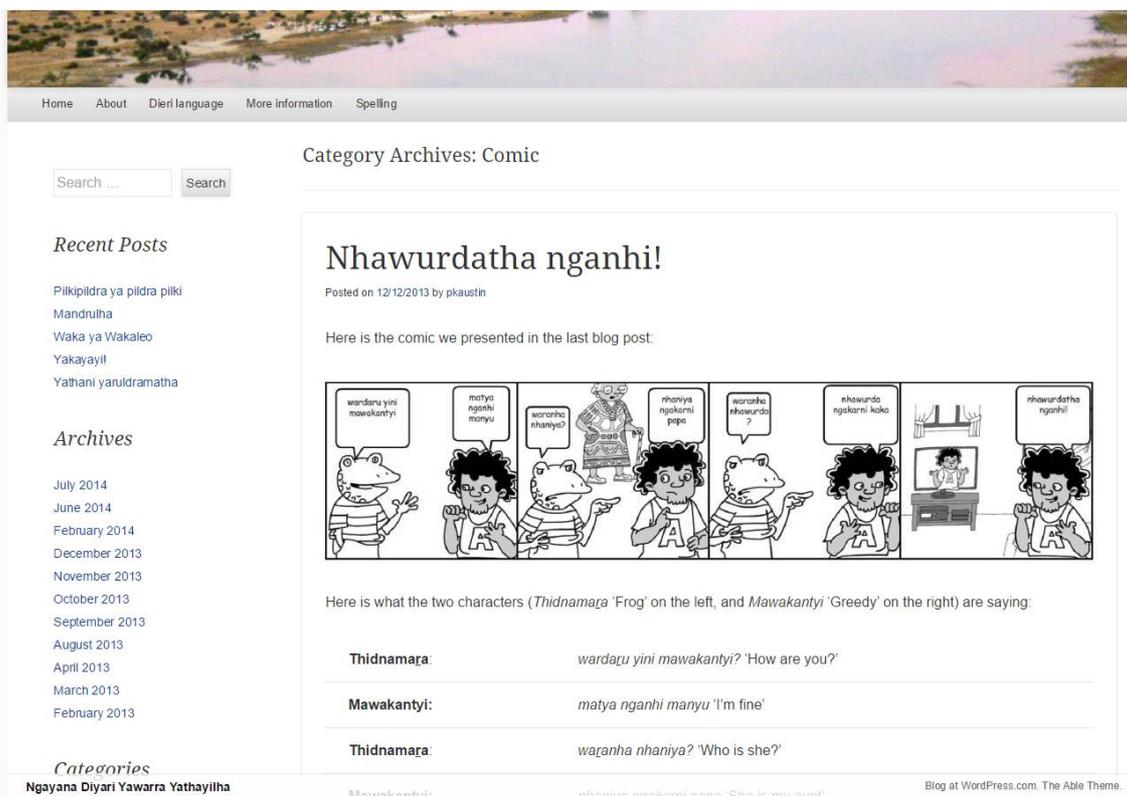
The ILS grant-funded revitalisation activities ended in September 2013, however interest in language revitalisation remains strong, especially among the key members of the DAC language group. In early 2014 the DAC was contacted by the Melbourne-based *Network for Linguistic Diversity* (RNLD) that runs ILS-funded local training courses for Aboriginal communities across Australia, and two training workshops on language recording and documentation techniques were run in Port Augusta, in April and October 2014. In November 2014 Michelle Warren (youngest daughter of Reg Warren, who is the secretary of the DAC language committee) undertook language revitalisation training in Melbourne and was able to both acquire new skills and to network with others interested in language revitalisation who were attending the training. It is planned that this activity will be followed up by future training workshops in Port Augusta.[16]

7. Conclusions

The Diyari language is unique in Australia in having been the subject of intensive interest and support by outsiders (missionaries, linguists) as well as by native speakers for almost 140 years. In addition to a large amount of translations and language documentation materials produced over this time, there was a continuous period of active literacy in the language by Diyari speakers from the 1870s to the 1960s. The

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[16] Reg has also become very interested in revitalisation and in December 2014 recorded a short video of himself speaking Diyari during an excursion to Cooper Creek, the heartland of traditional Diyari country. Michelle (p.c. January 2015) also reports evidence of recent increased Diyari language use by children (for further discussion see Austin 2015).

closing of the mission in 1914 shattered the then vibrant speech community. However, since the 1990s the development of a strong group identity through the formation of the Dieri Aboriginal Corporation, together with recognition of traditional land rights and cultural heritage responsibilities by both state and national governments as well as multinational corporations has led to an active programme of language revitalisation that culminated in the last three years in an application for an Indigenous Languages Support grant that resulted in a range of local, national and international language-related activities. Far from being 'extinct' the Diyari language today has a number of living speakers and a community that is keen to see it learned and maintained for the future.

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