Submission to the Productivity Commission
Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

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Executive summary

We welcome the opportunity to provide this response to the Productivity Commission's Indigenous Evaluation Strategy issues paper.

We wish to draw attention to **effective communication as a pivotal issue in evaluation**, related to all processes in policy and program cycles, and thus to a principle-based framework for the evaluation of policies and programs affecting Indigenous Australians. Although pivotal, the **fundamental role of effective communication** in implementing policies and programs, and the linguistic means by which this is achieved, is typically ignored, as is the preferred language of clients. Bypassing the issue of effective communication in this manner, in turn, negatively affects standards for evaluation.

We propose the following principles. Principles 1-3 are aimed at ensuring that **effective communication** underlies policy and evaluation cycles, while Principal 4 relates to **responsible documentation and archiving**, a cost-effective principle:

(1) Effective communication is a pivotal issue in an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
(2) Effective communication in an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy is differentiated according to individuals' language repertoires and/or to communities' (place based) language ecologies
(3) An Indigenous Evaluation Strategy uses methods that are sensitive to language ecologies
(4) An Indigenous Evaluation Strategy requires a knowledge and evidence base of consistent policy/program documentation with accessible archiving, regardless of whether they are prioritised for evaluation

Key recommendations

*We recommend that **Effective Communication** be made a key overlying principle in the proposed Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, as it applies across the board to evaluation of mainstream and Indigenous focussed programs*.

*We recommend that policy implementors and evaluators consider **the language repertoires of the stakeholder groups** through explicitly and systematically identifying which language/s would provide the most effective means of engagement in any policy cycle and evaluation process*.

*We recommend that **rigorous documentation and accessible archiving** of policy/program material is undertaken as part of an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, irrespective of whether it is to be evaluated, as this **track record and knowledge base** is a fundamental part of the big picture required for meaningful evaluation.*

Contributing authors

The authors of this submission are researchers and practitioners who together have on-the-ground experience of mainstream and Indigenous specific policies and programs, particularly but not exclusively in the area of languages in education and training. This includes the impact of these policies and programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. The first author has experience of co-design of projects with Indigenous organisations, communities and groups, management of Indigenous specific programs and projects focused around languages, including interpreter training, community language programs, awareness of local language ecologies (especially contact languages), education of Indigenous teachers, including languages teachers, education of mainstream teachers working with Indigenous language speaking children, developing language-based policy, curriculum and pedagogy for Indigenous students; the second author has expertise with designing language proficiency tools that are inclusive of Indigenous students and their language ecologies, including for use by non-specialist educators. The third author has carried out program evaluation research in educational contexts and has extensive experience in the assessment of proficiency in additional languages.

Principle 1: Effective communication is a pivotal issue in an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy

Effective communication is a pivotal issue in evaluation. It is fundamental to how an evaluation is carried out. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how unfettered and complex input can be given and/or received, if there are barriers to shared communication between program clients and evaluators. This is the main issue we want to talk about. We do not see any reference to effective communication and/or the language(s) of interaction in the selected general principles table (Table 3, PC Issues paper) or the frameworks and principles for evaluation of policies and programs affecting indigenous people table (Table 4, PC Issues Paper). "Culture" is referred to in Table 4, presumably as a factor that enhances or impedes the mutual understandings required for effective evaluation. But "culture" does not constitute an explicit reference to the principle that "effective communication" is required in an evaluation process. Specifically, there are language choices to be made in order to facilitate optimal communication between peoples who speak different languages and dialects, at least one as a mothertongue, and the other(s) likely at varying levels of proficiency.

The issue of "effective communication" cuts across both mainstream and Indigenous policies and programs. In both types of programs and policies, if the "languages factor" is left out of policy, and/or from the aims, design, delivery, evaluation and reporting of programs, one of the most fundamental variables is missing.

In general, evaluations, regardless of the model, should work for the greater benefit of clients/users, public policy etc. However, they can also perpetuate ignorance, misinformation and misdirection. Every time we leave out "effective communication", specifically in the form of the language(s) of the policy/program client group, and the language(s) of evaluation stakeholder groups, there is a pernicious downstream effect that reinforces a current lackadaisical attitude. Currently, language as the medium of communication, and not the same thing as literacy (McKay, 2006; Angelo, 2013), is rarely addressed in government programs. Language as a medium of "effective communication" implies mutual understanding, and this requires a mutual language spoken to sufficient levels of proficiency. If the language medium(s) of communication is not a requisite reportable item, then it remains invisible in future program and evaluation design and processes, and so the hegemonic cycle of invisibility and minoritisation of speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Traditional and New, continues (Sellwood & Angelo, 2013; Dixon & Angelo, 2014).

From the perspective of the quality assurance of evaluation models and processes, if there is no pre-requisite step that involves identifying the language(s) of the participants, then there is no guarantee at all that the evaluator/researcher group has taken steps to ensure their understanding of the stakeholder/client group, and vice versa. Nothing could make the importance of this clearer than understanding what it means, as an English speaking researcher/evaluator, essentially monolingual apart from a smattering of high-school level foreign languages, to sit down in a community in the Pitjantjatjara lands, and discuss the many and complex effects of NAPLAN on student learning and attendance, teachers, school and community participation. Likewise, in the many communities where language contact and shift processes have generated a New Language, a contact language such as a creole

that is the shared everyday language of the community (New Languages are explained further below, and in the Appendix).

Both with speakers of a Traditional Language like Pitjantjatjara or a New Language such as Kriol, “effective communication” requires awareness and planning as to the manner in which this will occur, be it in the local language and/or through English: No matter which, bilingual expertise is required – either in the form of interpreters or bilingual assistants, who render the speech of one party in the language of the other party, or else the research/evaluation is conducted by a proficient bilingual person. Otherwise, only the stakeholders/clients with high levels of English are consulted for the evaluation, which might not be representative (a fact about the conduct of the evaluation which would be useful to know), or no consideration was given to the effect of clients’/stakeholders’ English proficiency (this too would be useful - and worrying - to know).

The effect of what constitutes the language medium for achieving “effective communication” flows all the way through to Aboriginal ways of speaking English, as shown in the research of Diana Eades in law and Ian Malcolm in education. The language varieties discussed by Eades and Malcolm, are at the surface level reasonably close to Standard Australian English. If effective communication is demonstrably disrupted with Aboriginal ways of speaking English, we can imagine what happens with speakers of languages at further distances from English, and/or of undetermined levels of English proficiency. We simply do not hear reported in evaluations whether there was any consideration of matching the language of the evaluation (data collection methods and reporting) to those of the client/stakeholder groups. We do not hear if an evaluation considered evidence of client/stakeholder group’s proficiencies. Nor do we know if an evaluation formed any judgements about the usefulness of English, if this was the language intentionally selected (or an accidental default), as a method of communication.

We recommend that *Effective Communication* be made a key overlying principle in the proposed Indigenous Evaluation Strategy, as it applies across the board to evaluation of mainstream and Indigenous focussed programs.

Principle 2: Effective communication in an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy is differentiated according to individuals' language repertoires and/or to place-based language ecologies[1]

In order to achieve "effective communication", an evaluation strategy has to respond to individuals' language repertoires and/or to the community-wide language ecology.

> *A **language repertoire** is the range of languages and language varieties that an individual speaks, possibly at different levels of proficiency.*
>
> *A **language ecology** comprises the constellation of different but expected languages and language varieties that are spoken in a particular locality, including the extent to which each is spoken.*
> Angelo & Poetsch (in press)

The present day Indigenous "language landscape" has changed profoundly over the more than two centuries since invasion and colonisation by English speakers began on this continent. As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speak many kinds of languages and language varieties in addition to the original Traditional Languages. These include "New Languages", caused by language contact and shift processes, and "Identity Englishes", which is a collective term for the ways of speaking English that are particular to some groups of Aboriginal people and of Torres Strait islander people. Some of these languages/varieties are employed, almost exclusively, for in-group communication purposes. That is, their speakership is almost entirely Indigenous, and they are used within local Aboriginal speech communities or local Torres Strait Islander speech communities. So, in many instances, fully proficient speakers are predominantly Indigenous people (see Appendix 1 for more details about these languages and language varieties).

Standard Australian English, the variety of English used by the nation's public institutions, the media and much of the private business sector, is spoken by some Indigenous Australians as their first language, and learned by others as an additional/second language.

Any of these languages/language varieties can be spoken as an Indigenous person's mothertongue/first language or learned as an additional/second language. A mothertongue/first language is acquired effortlessly, from birth, and spoken fluently (in just about all cases). However, learning an additional/second language can result in proficiency at any level, from quite rudimentary (e.g. some words), to an intermediate level (e.g. knowing common phrases, assembling simple sentences), right through to a highly advanced level (e.g. able to express anything, like a mothertongue speaker).

In many Indigenous communities, one kind of language or language variety dominates the language ecology because it is the most known and used for most everyday communications between most community members. If this is an Indigenous language or language variety,

[1] The information on Indigenous language repertoires and language ecologies in this submission, unless otherwise referenced, is taken from Angelo (2017) *Are we there yet. Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander language ecologies in policy*.

then it is often the case that Standard Australian English will have been learned by community members as an additional language or language variety. An evaluation undertaken in such language ecologies should require evaluators to consider how to optimise effective communication with clients/stakeholders (see the Framework in Table A below).

Table A
Framework for considering an individual's language repertoire or a community-wide language ecology

	Spoken as a mothertongue	Spoken as an additional language High proficiency i.e. like a mothertongue ⟷ less proficiency i.e. with less facility
Traditional Languages: those with original (pre-colonial) connections to specific tracts of land		
New Languages: those caused by language contact in post-invasion and colonisation times		
Identity Englishes: those ways Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people speak English		
Standard Australian English: the variety of English used in our institutions and the media		

from: Angelo, D. (in press). Creoles, education and policy. in Routledge Handbook of Pidgin and Creole languages

The language(s) spoken as a mothertongue or as an additional language with a high level of proficiency as shown in the Framework above (Table A) are those in which evaluations should be conducted (see Appendix for a Key for using the above Framework).

In most evaluations of policy/programs – mainstream or Indigenous focused – it appears that (Standard Australian) English has been an undisclosed and unexamined default setting: the unstated linguistic medium through which the program/policy has been evaluated (and often through which the program has been delivered). Curiously, the ramifications of this language choice, in terms of delivering the program/policy and collecting data to evaluate it, is apparently (and erroneously) not considered to be pertinent.

Questions will be raised as to how non-language specialists could be given guidance about embedding "effective communication" into program aims and design and into the evaluation process. Ascertaining levels of mutual language proficiency, for example, should be a significant part of the evaluation process if the evaluation takes place in English. Understandings about levels of English language proficiency may in some contexts be best supported by the use of proficiency tools: this would apply in schools where students are given a suite of literacy measurement tools, which are often mistaken to be measures of levels of underlying language proficiency. In most contexts, however, the use of formal

proficiency tools may not be practical or appropriate. Rather, steps need to be taken to get an understanding of general levels of mutual proficiency, to ensure "effective communication" is taking place.

We provide an example of how effective communication is taken into consideration in one program. Reasonable steps, in plain English, are outlined by the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to assist with assessing when to use an Aboriginal interpreter. They provide a pragmatic, interactive and contextualised approach which non-language specialists could implement when conducting evaluations. They would assess whether individuals' comprehension and production of English (if this is the language of the evaluation research) was sufficient to grant them full access and input into the evaluation process.

When to use an Aboriginal Interpreter
https://nt.gov.au/community/interpreting-and-translating-services/aboriginal-interpreter-service/when-to-use-an-aboriginal-interpreter

In an English-based communication context, we are advised to consider "whether the person can understand the full range of the English language - including at speed and technical terms in the relevant situation such as court, police interview and negotiations". Likewise, we are told to consider if the person "can communicate as well as the average native speaker of English in the relevant situation".

The steps then proceed:

- Ask if they want an interpreter
- Ask open-ended questions
- Assess their comprehension
- Assess their communication

Each of the above steps is illustrated with brief, practical "how-to" guidance.

Due to the relative oversight of the need to guarantee "effective communication" as a pivotal requirement for government policies and programs:

1) accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreters are not available in all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. In these cases, plan with local people on the ground how best to collect evaluation information from the relevant stakeholders and participants. For instance, with a family member or ally from the same organisation, who is considered to have good bilingual skills and knowledge of the context, who is asked to explain for both sides.

2) even accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreters have not had access to the same formal training opportunities as some overseas language interpreters (who for instance may have had university level training, which does not occur for speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages). In the case of specialist topics that are likely to be unfamiliar to the stakeholders and participants involved in the evaluation, plan with local people on the ground to brief the interpreters or bilingual assistants about how to express the concepts, vocabulary and questions that will occur.

Principle 3: An Indigenous Evaluation Strategy uses methods that are sensitive to language ecologies

As outlined in the issues paper, there are many methods used for evaluation, but there is a strong tendency, led by educational research clearing houses in the United States, to take for granted that Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) are the ideal or even only method for evaluating the outcome of an educational intervention. As noted in the issues paper, RCTs are rarely insightful about reasons why something did or did not 'work'. While RCTs are well suited to some kinds of research and some research contexts, any policy that seeks to understand something fundamentally dependent on language (such as education) or that requires and understanding of spoken or written language in data collection is at risk of flawed findings if statistical power is achieved by randomizing group allocation without a robust understanding of the first and additional language proficiencies of the participants. The adoption of RCTs in educational contexts where the language backgrounds of the children are extremely diverse, coupled with diverse Standard Australian English proficiency levels of the children mean that the formation of comparison groups is extremely difficult, if not impossible. The capacity to form random groupings is also contentious because of the diversity of contexts, ranging from inner urban to very remote, and the small numbers of participants that can meaningfully be allocated to a group. Further, there are ethical considerations in the allocation of participants to control and 'treatment' groups, especially when allocating people to groups in educational contexts where they may miss out on an educational opportunity or conversely, be allocated to a group that experiences an inappropriate or ineffective program as a result of random allocation rather than program implementation that is based on careful consideration of the context, including its language ecology.

Standardized tests are similarly prone to insensitivity to language. Since its implementation in 2008, NAPLAN has been used as both an educational policy in and of itself, as well as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of other programs through correlation. However, NAPLAN is delivered in Standard Australian English and its reporting patterns do not contain disaggregation of the data that would indicate that many Indigenous children are doing the tests in their second language, with unknown levels of proficiency in English (Dixon & Angelo, 2014). The public discourse around the tests also ignores this fact and it has been enduringly negative about the literacy and numeracy achievements of Indigenous students. Further, the use of the tests in some Indigenous contexts has detrimental consequences on their learning (Angelo, 2013; Macqueen et al., 2019). As attractive as a single policy tool is for whole-of-population analysis, the language of the tool, and the evidence gap caused by its effect on resulting data, may severely limit the usefulness of the data and similarly affect the policy decisions based on it.

In order to avoid inappropriate implementation of policies, programs, tools and evaluation methods:

(1) methodological rigour and trustworthiness of data can only be attained through explicit and systematic consideration of the participants' language repertoires;
(2) evaluative processes that are sensitive to language ecologies should be developed before, and monitored throughout, the implementation of policies;

(3) multiple methods and multilingual, mixed methods should be considered for use in many Indigenous contexts (with explicit mention of languages and language proficiencies in the design and as potentially operative variables);
(4) longitudinal and cross-sectional designs should be used since the language of both individuals and communities change over time.

Principle 4: An Indigenous Evaluation Strategy builds a knowledge and evidence base of thorough and consistent policy/program documentation and accessible archiving of policies, programs and evaluations

Different and inconsistent requirements for policy/program documentation mean that an overall knowledge base for implementation and outcomes is lacking. Changes in departments and governments often lead to the complete deletion of public records and documentation, so even quite recent and sizable initiatives vanish without trace.

Governments have a responsibility to keep rigorous records and this has not been the case. Attending to this basic level of policy/program documentation will go some way to redressing the fact that all policies/programs will not receive an in-depth evaluation due to limits on the public purse: Permanent documentation will, however, still add to the evidence base, and provide material relating to Indigenous contexts, whether it is for mainstream policies/programs or those with an exclusively Indigenous focus. If an evaluation is the icing on the cake, thorough documentation and archiving of policy/program material is the cake.

The de-identified scenario below illustrates a real life example of a lack of archiving of reports on a large Commonwealth-funded project and a lack of access to documentation of an evaluation of the project. It demonstrates how, on a large scale, this can amount to a huge loss to publicly available knowledge and the "evidence base", and hence to the ability of others to learn from the process or the findings. This lack of records particularly affects the quality of evaluations of policy/programs that involve Indigenous people because of a rapid policy churn.

Example scenario

As Manager of a large project, one author worked with a team of languages educators and linguists and over 80 schools in state and Catholic sectors to develop teacher capacity in a pedagogical area. The program was funded under the former Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in the last decade. Two sizable interim progress reports were completed, plus a final report of about 90 pages, including with media release permissions for images. None of this material appears to be currently accessible to members of the public. Federal DET (when it was DETE, after changing from DEEWR) was emailed about the lack of available publicly accessible documentation, with zero response. Even this project material would provide significant information for anyone embarking on similar training endeavours, or as a comparison for evaluators of similar training projects.

In addition to the project documentation, interviews and lengthy written submissions and emails were provided during the project to an evaluator. As with most evaluations, the program was not staffed for this extra work, but it was undertaken in the belief that it would be for the public good, the benefit of students and their teachers, and possibly of influence on policy. Until recently, the project manager assumed that perhaps the evaluation was never finalised, due to a change of federal government and a likely change of policy direction. Certainly, there was no further communication about it. However, in a recent OECD publication, a positive but oblique mention of the project was noted by the author and colleagues: It was referenced as an unpublished evaluation report. One researcher on the OECD publication was contacted and that researcher suggested a contact person in the large organisation that undertook the evaluation/hosted the evaluator. (This organisation was also listed in the reference in the OECD report). Subsequently, there has been no reply to the emailed request for information about the evaluation from that individual in that organisation. It is not at all clear from the organisation's website how to proceed to get access to the unpublished evaluation.

Summary

We have set out four principles which are aimed at influencing the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

Principles 1-3 target the **effective communication** that is implied in policy and evaluation cycles. Effective communication is a necessary underlay of any worthwhile policy and evaluation effort, but achieving it requires efforts in

- understanding the language situation of the stakeholders,
- building methods that are sensitive to stakeholders' language repertoire, especially where this is unlikely to be monolingual (spoken or written) Standard Australian English.

Principle 4 states that the entire range of policy and program implementation through to any evaluations be amassed, over time, through responsible documentation and archiving that is immune to changes in government and departmental restructures.

The refreshed Closing the Gap agenda (COAG, 2018) contains few targets which will not require clients to speak and/or comprehend one or more languages in their policy implementation and evaluation. It is currently the default for policy implementors and evaluators to assume that their tools will utilise standard written or spoken English. An effective Indigenous Evaluation Strategy will correct this assumption.

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Appendix 1: Factoring in the Language Repertoires & Language Ecologies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples[2]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speak many kinds of languages and language varieties in addition to the original Traditional Languages. Appendix 1 provides details about these languages and language varieties. Any evaluation undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should require evaluators to consider which language(s) would optimise effective communication with clients/stakeholders (i.e. the Framework in Table A).

Note: This Framework, displaying the broad categories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and language varieties, appears in the body of the submission, under Principle 2 in the text. It is reproduced again here in this Appendix, for ease of reference for people using the Key that appears below.

Table A
Framework for considering an individual's language repertoire or a community-wide language ecology

	Spoken as a mothertongue	Spoken as an additional language high proficiency i.e. like a mothertongue ⟷ less proficiency i.e. with less facility
Traditional Languages: those with original (pre-colonial) connections to specific tracts of land		
New Languages: those caused by language contact in post-invasion and colonisation times		
Identity Englishes: those ways Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people speak English		
Standard Australian English: the variety of English used in our institutions and the media		

from: Angelo, D. (in press). Creoles, education and policy. in Routledge Handbook of Pidgin and Creole languages

The language(s) spoken as a mothertongue or as an additional language with a high level of proficiency are those in which evaluations should be conducted.

[2] The information on Indigenous language repertoires and language ecologies in this submission, unless otherwise referenced, is taken from Angelo (2017) *Are we there yet. Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander language ecologies in policy*.

A key for the Framework for checking an individual's language repertoire or a community-wide language ecology (Angelo 2017)

Traditional Languages

Around 11 of the approximately 250 original Traditional Languages are "strong" (Simpson et al 2018; and see the forthcoming *National Indigenous Languages Report (NILR)* from the Department of Communication and the Arts). These strong Traditional Languages have been transmitted intergenerationally, continuously, and remain to this day the main languages of everyday communication for most people in their community. Wherever these languages are acquired as a mothertongue/first language they are generally speakers' most favoured language of communication.

Where a Traditional Language is the dominant language in an individual's language repertoire or in a community wide language ecology, this language should be the medium for conducting an evaluation.

Other traditional languages are experiencing disruption to their transmission across generations. The speakership of some languages might be restricted to an older age group. For this age group, their most favoured language might not correspond to younger family or community members, a factor to consider if elderly people are involved in evaluation processes. Younger people might have a passive understanding of an older family member's language and might be able to facilitate communication.

Some languages might have passed out of being spoken actively, so they might be sleeping, or they might be undergoing a reawakening. Reviving/reawakening a sleeping language involves researching historical sources and working with any "rememberers" (people who remember hearing the language spoken, but did not have the opportunity to learn it), so that material on the language can be collected for the purpose of relearning it.

For individuals or communities who are relearning their Traditional Language(s), it would be a mark of respect of evaluators/researchers to acknowledge the Traditional Language of the Elders on whose country evaluation activities are taking place. In these language ecologies, it would not be appropriate to request an interpreter. The nature of these revival/reawakening settings is important to understand, because many Aboriginal people in these contexts are proudly declaring that they are speaking their relearned languages (i.e. working at regaining some proficiency) in the Census and other surveys. Evaluations need to distinguish between a dominant language as a matter of communicative prowess, and a language being relearned as a matter of the heart.

New Languages

Across Australia, particularly in the northern half of the continent, New Languages have been generated through language contact and shift processes. They are commonly spoken as a mothertongue and are often found as the community wide language of everyday communication. The largest Indigenous languages are, in fact, the New Languages Kriol and Yumplatok (also known as Torres Strait Creole). Kriol, spoken from the Kimberley to the Gulf country, has an estimated 20-30,000 speakers. Yumplatok from the Torres Strait - and

spoken by diaspora populations especially in large coastal Queensland towns such as Cairns and Townsville - has an estimated 20,000 speakers. Other New Languages are less well known. These New Languages are contact languages of the kind called “creoles”. Much of their vocabulary is, historically, of English origin, but their overall sentence structure, word building, sound system etc differs entirely from English, and hence they are considered different languages. Despite this technical classification, as there is not a widespread appreciation of these languages amongst the Australian public, they have sometimes been wrongly misconstrued as (poor) varieties of English (Angelo, Fraser & Yeatman, in press).

There are other creoles apart from Kriol and Yumplatok but they have less recognition, for example the creoles on Cape York Peninsula, such as Yarrie Lingo or Lockhart River Creole. These creoles have only recently taken on a name and are gaining in recognition, but they are not yet counted on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL). This means that language data collected here through the Census is highly inaccurate, so at this point in time evaluators/researchers need to take the responsibility of checking an individual’s or a community’s dominant and preferred language(Simpson et al, 2018).

Both Kriol and Yumplatok are listed in the Census, but their speaker numbers (both under 10,000) are considered vastly underreported. Again, the onus falls to evaluators/researchers to check with individual or community clients/stakeholders regarding the most effective medium of communication.

Two other New Languages, Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri, are also listed on the 2016 ASCL. Technically they are mixed languages with some components sourced from a Traditional Language and other components from English-based sources. Their speaker numbers in the Census data are also considered undercounts by a long way.

Identity Englishes

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have distinctive ways of speaking English that reflect their identity, as an Indigenous person from a particular place or with a particular language heritage. They can recognise if other Indigenous people share the same background by how they speak. For these reasons, these distinctive Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander ways of speaking English can be called “Identity Englishes”, to distinguish them from Standard Australian English.

Identity Englishes differ from each other and from Standard Australian English, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the variety. Identity Englishes typically do not have standardised names and they tend not to be reported/recorded in surveys such as the Census possibly because speakers tend to consider them as a way of speaking English, rather than as a separate language.

For evaluation purposes, the researcher/evaluator will need to ascertain if an individual or a community speaks an English that is distinctive from Standard Australian English, and whether this seems to pose a barrier to mutual comprehensibility between themselves and the clients/stakeholders (see submission section on Proficiency). In this situation, in consultation with evaluation participants, a local cultural facilitator might be the most

appropriate means of ensuring effective communication (as the language distance between these various Indigenous ways of speaking English are typically not great enough to warrant interpreting).

Standard Australian English

Many Australians, including many Indigenous Australians, speak Standard Australian English as their first and dominant language, from birth. It is the language used in Australian institutions, in schooling, training and higher education settings, in government, in the media, in hospitals etc.

If Standard Australian English is not spoken as a mothertongue, then it is often learned as an additional language, to a greater or lesser extent depending on opportunity. In the Australian Census, people who respond that they speak a language other than English are also asked to self-assess their English language proficiency on a four-point scale. This English proficiency data should be treated cautiously for a number of reasons. For example, people who cannot/do not declare they are speakers of New Languages appear by default as English speakers, and are not asked the English proficiency question. Furthermore, self-assessment may not be a reliable indicator (Angelo, 2013; Dixon and Angelo, 2014).

For all kinds of reasons, the researcher/evaluator should consider very carefully the apparent English proficiency of stakeholders/clients before conducting evaluations in Standard Australian English without any language support.