



## The Power of Hearing God's Word By David Barnett



On a very cold Monday morning, not long after Easter, a lone woman approached the tomb. "There's no-one in this grave, it's empty," the woman said. "You see, he is risen. After his body lay here, it wasn't decaying. He went away alive." This was a different empty tomb than the one Mary visited in Jerusalem, and this was a different woman.

Tjulyata is from Amata, a small community in the northwest of South Australia. After celebrating Easter at home in the APY Lands with friends and family, she has travelled to Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills. For a week she will work with Bible Society's Audio Project Coordinator Peter Hacquoil and former Pitjantjatjara Bible Translation Coordinator Paul Eckert, to produce an audio recording of the Book of Esther. This will be the latest instalment of Old Testament book recordings in Pitjantjatjara. Recently Bible translator Nurina Burton worked with Peter and Paul on a recording of the book of Daniel. After Esther, the plan is to record Ruth. A few years ago, the entire New Testament was recorded into Pitjantjatjara – a project that has proved to be a great blessing to many Pitjantjatjara folk who otherwise would not be able to access God's word. (Continue page 2)

**A PROJECT OF THE NORTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS AND THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NORTHERN SYNOD**



# The Power of Hearing God's Word (continues)

On a recent Bible distribution trip, a friend and supporter of the translation project was taking Bible resources to sell in the remote Pitjantjatjara community of Pipalyatjara. When he arrived in the community, he noticed a young man in his early twenties sitting near the store, who was looking rather dejected. After chatting with the young man, he learnt that his



grandfather – who was a strong Christian and big influence on his life – was currently in hospital and didn't have long to live. This young man was sharing with our friend that his grandfather's favourite verse was from John 13-14:

*"Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later... Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going*



*there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am."*  
(John 13:36; 14:1-3)

# The Power of Hearing God's Word (continues)

Our friend then told the young man that he had this verse recorded in Pitjantjatjara, on the Australian Bibles app. He then pulled out his phone and played it to the young man. The young man was amazed and thrilled to hear this in his own language! "Can you wait, I'll ring my grandfather so you can play it over the phone to him!" And so our friend played John 14 in Pitjantjatjara to the old man over his grandson's phone, as he lay sick in hospital. He was overjoyed when he heard it.

He died very soon afterwards. One of the very last things he heard then, was Jesus speaking to him in his language, in Pitjantjatjara, saying he's going to prepare a place for him. He couldn't see Jesus. All he had was his sick and frail body, which at that moment was failing him; but he heard the word of Jesus, and in his final moments in this world his faith was strengthened through hearing God's word.

Back in Hahndorf, Tjulyata entered into a small, dark chamber – not quite an empty tomb, but a recording booth. She began to read the Pitjantjatjara



text of the book of Esther, the story of one woman's incredible courage to risk her own life in speaking the truth in order to save her people from certain annihilation.

Who knows how the Lord might use this recording in the years to come? But we do know that faith and true life come from hearing God's word, and the Lord is in the business of bringing life out of death.

## Prayer for Coordinate in North East Arnhem By Margaret Miller

Pray for the plans underway for our second Experienced Translation workshop to be held from 29th June to 10th July at Nungalinga College.

Pray for decisions about the theme and key terms and Scripture passages to focus on at the workshop and for the preparation of teaching sessions.

Pray for travel and accommodation arrangements for 30 translators and their support staff, as well as computers and software for 15 language projects.

Pray for communities that have recently witnessed young men fighting, that has led to loss of life.

Pray that God's word will bring hope and restoration to fractured relationships.

Pray that through this difficult time, the young men will seek a better way and have a personal encounter with Jesus.

Pray for the new person needed to fill the position of Project Officer for Coordinate.

# Pitjantjatjara Old Testament Project Update



The Pitjantjatjara Bible will be the second Australian full Bible to be published. Having started in the 1960's it is so exciting to see that there is an end in sight with almost every book now having at least a first draft.

Dave Barnett's notes give a sense of how many translators are involved in this project:

End of March

2026: Currently keyboarding / editing Tjulyata's second draft of Ecclesiastes.

December 2025: Katrina, Audrey and I have just completed final drafts of the Book of Psalms. Now just needs back-translating, consultant-checking, typesetting and publishing.

**Translation:** Apart from Psalms, I've been working on second

drafts of 2 Kings with Deborah, third drafts of Leviticus with Tjulyata, first drafts of Joshua with Nurina. **Bible Engagement:** Jennifer, Nyunmiti and I have been meeting on Fridays to do a final check of the Pitjantjatjara Prayer Book. All the prayers are now very close to completion.

## From the Pitjantjatjara Archive

By Ann Eckert

### Pitjantjatjara Scripture Dedication 1987

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1987 was a day to be remembered – the new volume of Scripture was dedicated and distributed. We had submitted it for the printing process with the Bible Society in July 1986.

This volume contains the newly translated books of Genesis, Exodus, Jonah, Ruth and 1 Timothy done by Paul and Ann Eckert and their Pitjantjatjara co-translators, plus the Gospels, Acts, Ephesians and 1 John done previously by the Presbyterian Mission.

100 copies were air freighted from Hong Kong where it had been printed; the rest arrive sometime next month. You can imagine the feelings of relief when a single engine plane touched down on the Ernabella airstrip at 3pm on Thursday!!! We held the new volume in hand, with a glow of immense joy and a heart full of anticipation. And the dedication preparations got underway with fresh zest.



# From the Pitjantjatjara Archive (continues)



However, the planning had begun months before when Anmanari had an idea to begin with a certain drama. The details evolved and were adjusted right up until the last minute as some 400 people gathered on the evening of Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> – It was to be a unique and memorable occasion.

**The setting:** life before the first white missionary. A group of people were resting around an open campfire. A man by himself was resting at a smaller

fire after a long day's work of hunting. Happy singing filled the air – but also petty argument erupted and fighting followed. The drama was so real that some of the Pitjantjatjara audience were thinking there was real trouble and were about to step in and break it up. But it resolved itself.

**Into this scene** stepped the missionary wanting to communicate a message and carrying an English Bible. The part was ably played by John Phelps the visiting Bible Society representative from Adelaide. Well, the group listened, but not understanding mimicked his gestures, got wrong ideas and laughed at the incredulity of them and was puzzled in every way. This was quite an hilarious part really. Then, just like the earliest missionary had done, this one too offered them food – lollies. Different ones had different reactions – some smell it, some initiated it with underarm sweat, some buried it. The audience were really enjoying it all - you could hear it and feel it.

**Then the scene took an abrupt change** – the group was offered another Bible, one he thought they would appreciate. Appropriate amazement and some confusion set in about what a book was and then the Pitjantjatjara pastor got up and read from it and light dawned. It was a Pitjantjatjara Bible – one they could understand.

**After the little drama**, various people who had worked on the translation shared with those who had gathered what it meant to be a part of this team effort. Then the sales tables opened and the 100 copies were all sold in no time flat. This leaves quite a few people anxious for the day when the rest of the copies arrive.

Following the group were led by various Christians in a service of praise and testimony that concluded at midnight.

But that was just the beginning as we know it is the ingestion of the Word and obedience to its message and its author that is most important. That is why we were glad to hear comments like the following:

*"I read the story all morning. It's good"      "I can read without my glasses - the print size is so perfect."*  
*"Ewin preached from Exodus and part of 1 Timothy last night and his message reached into me and challenged and encouraged me deeply."...*



# Louise says farewell after eleven years with Coordinate

The time has come to move on and hand over to someone new. As I thought about what to write here, it was the photos that have appeared in the pages of this newsletter for the past eleven years that have stuck in my mind and have told the story of Coordinate throughout that time, and as my repeated plea to article authors has been 'take photos, it didn't happen if there isn't a photo!' it seems appropriate to use the photos to help tell about the highlights of my time with Coordinate. This is my 29th newsletter which can all be found on the Coordinate website, along with the thirteen earlier issues [Supporting Indigenous Scriptures | News & Events](#).

I'll start by thanking those who mentored me into my role as Resource Worker with Coordinate: Paul Eckert, Margaret Miller, Peter Jones and Mally McLellan. If I have learnt anything it is largely through their support, wisdom and guidance.

I took over from Hannah Harper in 2015 and have loved this role throughout my time. In that first year I got to meet everyone and slowly realised that every translation team needed



something different from me, the Kuninjku team needed a translation facilitator, the Mawng team needed me to sort out the logistics as their Gospel of Mark neared completion. In North East Arnhemland the various teams needed me to listen and to learn how important Scripture in Use was in driving translation. The Pitjantjatjara team were self-sufficient but kindly included me as chief cook and bottle washer.



This first year also saw the dedication of the Wangurri Gospel of Mark and my first Coordinate Reference Committee meeting held at Riyala outside of Darwin.

Easter at Pukatja to celebrate the dedication of the



Book of Daniel was the experience of a lifetime, only to be superseded with an invitation to accompany the Pitjantjatjara translation team to Israel.



2016 also saw the hundred year anniversary of the Church at Waruwi Goulburn Island which coincided with the dedication of their Gospel of Mark in Mawng.

Probably one of the most pivotal meetings during my time was at Yirrkala when translators



revealed their passion for Scripture, Bible translation, the desire to follow the call of the Holy Spirit when choosing what to translate and their need for accredited training in translation at Nungalingya.



# Louise says farewell after eleven years with



The launch of the film 'Yolŋu Story of Faith' in 2017 was a blessing to North East Arnhemland, as an expression of the importance of Scripture in Yolŋu languages.

After the meeting in Yirrkala, developing a Diploma of Translation at Nungalingya became a priority, by the end of 2018 we were ready to advertise for

Translation Coordinator at Nungalingya and the Diploma was run in 2019, Coordinate has been a

significant supporter of the Translation training at Nungalingya, contributing much time and resources from the beginning.



2019 also saw us collaborating with Nungalingya on the 'Multiplying the Multitude' conference—2 days of focus on language and faith.

With the arrival of Covid in 2020 there came a halt to big workshops and classes at Nungalingya. This did give time for smaller groups to get to work such as the Gupapuyŋu project. There was also the opportunity to work with Missions Interlink to develop a Cross-cultural workshop to help Christians and others

to transition into living and working in remote Australia. Transition Training for Remote Indigenous Ministry was begun in 2021. We're now in our sixth year and going strong as word of mouth has led to increasing numbers of participants each year.



2022 brought dedications in one of the oldest Australian projects with the reprint of the Gumatj New Testament and one of the newest projects with the dedication of the first story in Mayali, the Christmas story.

Another journey began for Coordinate that would lead to the development of Scripture for Australian Indigenous Languages (SAIL). Margaret Miller and I were invited to present at an Oceania Gathering in Sydney auspiced by Bible Society Australia and SIL Pacific



(Support for Indigenous Languages). We outlined 'What we Need to Get the Job Done': Developing relationships first before striving to achieve outcomes; supporting Nungalingya to provide training to translators and Scripture in Use workers; having access to people with technical expertise; providing safe, affordable and sustainable accommodation in remote communities for workers who can support our projects in community; ensuring there is good quality cross-cultural training for workers; developing processes that will enable Indigenous translators and Scripture Engagement workers to be paid.



All successful projects start with relationships. Content and products will follow.

# Louise says farewell after eleven years with Coordinate



This meeting in Sydney led to an Australian National gathering of Scripture workers and Bible translators in Darwin in 2023 which in turn led to the development of SAIL.

In 2023 the Maningrida translation Centre was built by Mobile Mission Maintenance with funds from a Parkhill Foundation. With a big workshop space and a twin bed unit it remains as a model for other remote communities to solve their accommodation and workshop space limitations. The translation centre is now in hot demand as the

accommodation shortage in Maningrida continues to worsen.

With the graduation of the Diploma of Translation students at Nungalinya it was clear that there was not another cohort of students ready to study at Diploma level. So with expertise from Mally McLellan and Ben Van Gelderan The Certificate 2 in Translation was developed and accredited for Nungalinya. The



Yolŋu Matha cohort graduated in 2025 and the Bininj Kunwok cohort will graduate this year.

Coordinate translators have benefited greatly from this project. We will continue to benefit as the Certificate 3 in Translation is developed, hopefully to be up and running in 2027.



After five years without an experienced translator workshop we finally recovered from Covid lockdowns and held an incredible workshop on 'the Names of God' in early 2025 with twelve languages represented. It was two weeks of training and drafting with the expectation from the translators that this will be an annual event. As expected, The next workshop is in the midst of planning and will be run in early July.



So it is here that I come to say farewell, sort of! May 5th will be my final day in this role and as Lindsay said 'but why not do 30 newsletters'? Well, my role has been advertised so a new person will be introducing themselves

in the next newsletter.

My plans are to revel in retirement in Darwin as my application to become a Wycliffe member is processed. I will continue in my role as a teacher at Nungalinya in the Certificate in Translation for the West Arnhemland languages, continue as a facilitator in the TTRIM course, continue contributing to SAIL and put my linguistic qualifications to good use as a facilitator with the Mayali project in Jabiru.

# SAIL, Scripture for Australian Indigenous Languages Update

By Louise Macdonald



SAIL or Scripture for Australian Indigenous Languages is one of the most significant innovations in Bible Translation and Scripture Engagement in the last five years. This national collaboration of the organisations that are involved in this work means that all our resources can be targeted more effectively and we can avoid the wastage when 'the wheel is constantly re-invented'. Our latest efforts have been developing a strategic plan which

is looking at six key areas as introduced in our flyer printed here on page 10.

We are grateful to the Katherine Christian Convention for giving us their Mission Spot. Unfortunately the recent floods have put those plans on hold until the Katherine Show Grounds can be repaired. We still hope to have a presence either at the rescheduled convention in June or in 2027. By then we will have an online prayer guide collated by Jen Brownhill at Perth YWAM. Thanks to Stuart Cameron for creating banners and flyers for the Cairns 150th celebration which can be used for future events. We now have more time to prepare our plans for a stall, an Oral Bible Translation taste and see workshop, presentations, National Prayer Guide and Tshirt printing. We are grateful for the opportunity to promote the work of our translators and Scripture Engagement workers.

Of particular interest to Coordinate is the focus on encouraging and supporting workers to live in community or have strong relationships within communities that help to facilitate this work.

Coordinate is also very keen to develop and maintain partnerships that facilitate the visions and dreams of our local churches to have Scripture in their own languages.

**KCC** Katherine Christian Convention

All One in Christ

KCC is a member of **missions interlink**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Katherine Christian Convention**

*"Seeking the Kingdom Together"*

**June 19-22, 2026**

*New dates due to the impact of the floods.*

**Speakers:**  
**Annette Patrick, Lynette Tasman, Mat Anderson**  
*and with input from Lajamanu Baptist Church.*

**Come and camp from 1 pm Friday**  
Services every evening, 1.30 pm Saturday and 9.30 am Sunday  
Fees \$20/adult for 1 day and up to \$80 for 3 days for 2 adults & 4 children

**Sponsors:** bca, Wycliffe Bible Translators, MISSION AUSTRALIA

Canteen available: [www.kathcc.org](http://www.kathcc.org)



Louise modelling a SAIL Tshirt at Synod

Coordinate Issue #42 May 2026

# Scripture in Australian Indigenous Languages



We serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the making of disciples through Scripture in Australian Indigenous Languages.

## Story & Prayer:

SAIL will help all Australian churches learn about and pray for communities and the need for Scriptures in Indigenous Languages.

**Research:** SAIL will keep learning about new ways to work better and faster.

**Disciples:** SAIL will help grow disciples by getting Scriptures into communities.



**Partnerships:** SAIL will keep working together and will look for new organisations to join the mission.

**Funding:** SAIL will explore new ways to fund projects so they can keep growing.

**Workers:** SAIL will help find and train people to work with communities on Scripture projects.

**SAIL is a partnership of Christian organisations. Please contact us if you are interested in growing Scripture projects in your Indigenous Languages.**

phone: 08 89111326 or  
email: [sail@ausil.org.au](mailto:sail@ausil.org.au)



# Translation Problem Solving in Mawng

By Anne Spragg

In March, some of the Mawng translators came to Darwin to continue working on 1 Thessalonians. The team drafted 14 verses from chapters 2 and 3. Working on letters in Mawng brings some unique challenges—thinking through different styles, longer sentence structures, and how best to express key biblical ideas. One verse that required lots of thought was chapter 2 verses 19–20:

“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”

The group discussed whether a rhetorical question was appropriate or if a sentence would be clearer. What words or phrases could be used for abstract nouns like “hope,” “joy,” and “glory”? What does the “crown” metaphor mean, and is there an equivalent in Mawng, or should the focus be on its meaning? And how does this whole verse fit within the flow of the passage?

As we worked through these questions, “hope” became the biggest point of discussion. It was the first time the team had translated the word, and there was no direct equivalent in Mawng. The conversation began with the idea of waiting, but as we talked it became clear that hope is more than waiting—it also includes wanting, and in this passage, a sense of certainty and assurance. This led the group to form a phrase that brings these ideas together: “waiting knowing what we want will happen.” The team also decided that rather than explaining the “crown” metaphor, it would be clearer to express its meaning—pride and boasting.

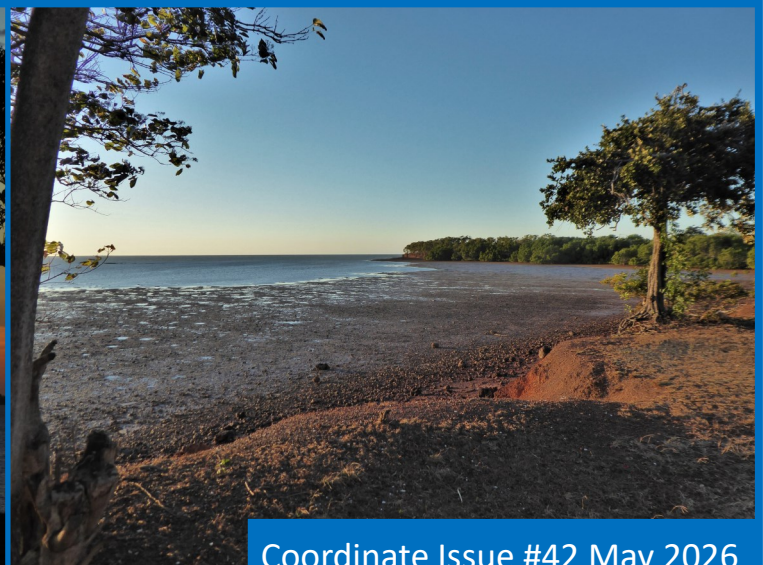
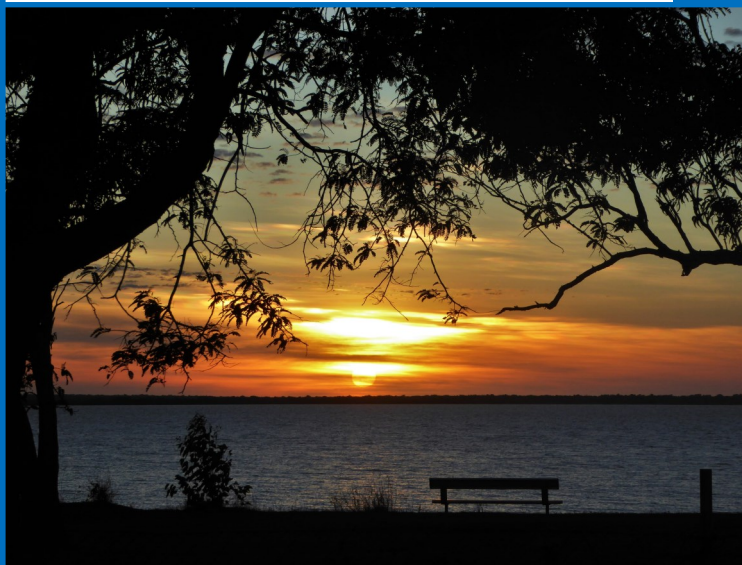
The drafted verses in Mawng read:

“Nuwurripa ta ngarrungula ngatpin marmarr mira, la wularrut ngarrungpurrin la ngarrungmirlajun tuka ngarrungmiyarma kiki angpanamin parak. Jesus iwamurnanganika la arkkpalangali rtil tuka yanat nuyu, la ngarri kurrungpungij tuka kutpartukpung ta wurluj nuyu Jesus. La ngarri ngatpanamin marmarr murnin nuwurri kurralyungan la kutpartukpung nuyu ja Jesus. Ee aralpa nuwurri ngarrunguliny ngatpin marmarr mira, la ngarri ngarrungmiyarma ngatpanaminpu wigarra yirk tuka kutatparlankayiny nuyu Jesus.”

This verse was a great example of the problem solving involved in translation, as we thought through important themes in the passage—hope, assurance, encouragement, and the return of Christ. It also demonstrated the value of teamwork in translation, bringing together people’s knowledge of their own language, the original text, and Scripture. The week was a clear reminder that translation is not just about the final product, but about the journey of learning and growing together.

The team is now back in Warruwi, community checking and back-translating the drafted verses, and will begin chapter 4 in May.

The Glory of God at Warruwi, morning sunrise



Coordinate Issue #42 May 2026

## 'There's No Word for Sheep' by Larissa

Shepherds watching their sheep—it's a familiar part of the Christmas story. But what do you do when there's no word for "sheep"? How do you tell that part of the story in a way that people will understand while still staying true to the meaning?

In the week after Easter, four translators came to Darwin for an Iwaidja translation workshop. It was the third time most of them had attended, and over four or so days they produced a complete first draft of the Christmas story from Luke 2:6–12. What remains now is some further community and consultant checking before it's ready to be put in books, posters, recordings and used to create other resources for Christmas.

Throughout the week, the team took time to carefully consider how Bible stories had been told in Iwaidja in the past. Two stories were published as picture books in the 1980s, and four short retellings were recorded by Global Recordings Network around a similar time, including the Christmas story. Together, the translators reflected on the words chosen back then and thought about how the language has changed. In some cases, earlier translations used more 'heavy' words, but this time the team aimed for 'light' words, so the story would be easy to understand for everyone, especially kids.

They also worked through how to translate ideas that don't exist directly in Iwaidja. The example of the shepherds and their sheep is one that stood out. There's no specific word for "sheep" in Iwaidja, although there are words for other animals like cows and goats. The team looked at the older recordings, which borrowed the English word, and also considered how the story had been translated in Mawng, another of the languages that they speak. In Mawng, an existing word for animals in general ('ears' meaning things with ears) has been adapted to refer to sheep, or more broadly to animals that people look after. Drawing on this idea, the translators explored a similar creative pathway in Iwaidja, finding a natural way to express the meaning within their own language.

In addition to the translation work, the workshop was a good time of fellowship, sitting together, sharing about God's work in their lives and community, reflecting on the celebrations of Easter that had just happened, and looking ahead to sharing the story of Christmas with their community.



Serina Lee, Mandy Noinba, Sandra Dudanga & Sophia Lee

YES...

### I want to Support Indigenous Scriptures through Coordinate

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

- For \$20, I would like to become a Coordinate Partner, (1 year)
- Please register my small group or church as a Coordinate Partner (1 year)
  - \$50 Small Group
  - \$150 Church
- I would like to make a gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### I would like my offering to support:

- Coordinate General
- Central Australia (Pitjantjatjara)
- East Arnhem translation
- East Arnhem Scripture in Use
- West Arnhem General
- West Arnhem (Maung)
- West Kimberley

### METHOD OF PAYMENT

- Cheque or money order attached.
- Direct deposit:
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  - BSB 634 634
  - ACC 100039620

Please label your deposit with your name, and return this slip to Coordinate.

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