



MEDIA RELEASE

**PAUL LYNCH MP
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (MENTAL HEALTH)**

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Revitalising Gamilaraay language

The Lemma Government is helping protect and promote Gamilaraay through its community language grants program.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Paul Lynch today announced \$20,000 in grant funding for the Wilmali Bulaarr Tingha.

Under this year's program, the Muurbay Aboriginal Cultural Co-operative will also run two State-wide summer schools early next year.

The summer schools – focussing on languages including Gumilaraay – will target both beginners and advanced students.

The schools will be held at the Koori Centre University in Sydney during January-February 2009.

Mr Lynch said New South Wales had a proud record of recording and teaching Aboriginal languages.

“New South Wales was the first government in Australia to adopt a formal indigenous language policy,” he said.

“For more than 20 years, Aboriginal people have made it clear that they want their languages back as a vital part of their culture, identity and pride,” Mr Lynch said.

“For Aboriginal people, language is a direct link to their identity, land and country and reflects their unique cultural concepts, spirituality and way of looking at the world,” he said.

Before the arrival of Europeans, at least 70 Aboriginal languages and dialects were spoken in the area now called New South Wales.

Now there are only about 20 distinct Aboriginal languages used in the State.

“Through the hard work of our Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre, we are determined to help Aboriginal people retain their languages,” Mr Lynch said.

MEDIA CONTACT: Cecilia Anthony 0447 268 748