



VACLnews

Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages

July 2002

DICTIONARY AND CD OF ABORIGINAL PLACENAMES OF VICTORIA LAUNCHED IN GEELONG

The most detailed and extensive Victorian dictionary of Aboriginal placenames and companion CD were launched earlier in May at the Geelong Conference Centre.

The *Dictionary of Aboriginal Placenames of Victoria* contains over 3,000 placenames from 35 Victorian Aboriginal languages and is the product of three years' work by historical geographers Dr Ian Clark and Toby Heydon.

The dictionary and CD Rom (called Database of Aboriginal Placenames of Victoria) were commissioned by the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) and funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

VACL Chairperson John Atkinson said the dictionary and CD Rom would help keep Aboriginal culture alive in Victoria.

"Like every part of our culture, language, if not alive and being used, can soon be found only in the many archives and libraries where we spend countless hours trying to retrieve it," Mr Atkinson said.

ATSIC Chair Mr Geoff Clark says the dictionary will advance reconciliation, commenting that "...a greater awareness of our culture by non-Indigenous people is an important step in unifying the Australian community."

The dictionary contains existing Aboriginal placenames (such as Warrnambool, Bulleen, Croajingolong), Aboriginal names for places with European names (such as Melbourne, Stawell, Bairnsdale) and Aboriginal names for natural features currently unnamed. In addition to providing the placename and its meaning, the dictionary contains information



Photo: Dr Ian Clark, Lisa Arnold, Toby Heydon, Lynne Dent, Bruce Pascoe and Doris Paton

on the name's language of origin, the Aboriginal language area and local government area in which it occurs, as well as grid reference, source information and a short discussion on each entry.

"As a result of the breadth of research, the work contains a great deal of information on each place, often providing several different names for the one place, and representing the rich cultural diversity of Aboriginal languages in Victoria," Mr Heydon said.

He said the process of compiling the database had been innovative, drawing on wide-ranging sources, and provided a methodology and model for similar projects Australia-wide.

The data is available in either single volume dictionary, four regional dictionaries, or on CD Rom. The CD Rom contains the most extensive data, with up to ten variant names given for each place. The data in a restricted format can also be viewed on the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages website at www.vaclang.org.au

Toby Heydon and Giuseppe Stramandinoli

WATHAURONG NEWS

The Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative have received financial support from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages to begin work on the compilation of a Wathaurong dictionary in book and Cd rom formats as well as some learning aids and posters.

Linguist, Sharnthi Pillay, who worked on the Keeray wurrung dictionary, will work with Wathaurong Language Project Researcher, Bruce Pascoe, to convert the Project database into a community dictionary showing not just words but pronunciation and grammar guides.

Community members have contributed to the database over the past three years and now it is time for the community to receive the benefit of that work.

The first materials will be available early in 2003 with the dictionary planned for release in 2004. Meanwhile a publication of the indigenous names of plants and



Photo: Bruce Pascoe

animals and another volume on indigenous place names of Victoria are already available from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

Community members wanting further information or who wish to make additional contributions should ring Bruce on 52 379 227 or email pascoe@vicnet.net.au

Bruce Pascoe

LANGUAGE BRIDGES CULTURAL BARRIERS

Koorie Early Childhood Field Officer (KECFO) Lynne Dent has introduced the traditional Ganai language to 20 preschools in Gippsland.

The Ganai language program, aimed at overcoming cultural barriers, has resulted in an increase in enrolments of Koorie children in preschool programs from 38 in 1998 to 64 in 2001.

'There has been a greater acceptance of different cultures in preschools and a willingness by preschool staff to ensure that their programs are culturally appropriate,' Mrs Dent said.

'Staff, children and their parents – Koorie and non-Koorie are delighted with the program.'

The CD took three years to complete with the CALC Multimedia Unit at the Victorian University of Technology at Melbourne. *Nambur Ganai* (Talking Ganai) has games, three traditional Ganai stories and a component that allows students to record themselves speaking Ganai.

By playing it back students can learn to correctly pronounce the words.

Nambur Ganai is the first interactive language teaching CD Rom in Australia. Mrs Dent works as a Koorie Early Childhood Field Officer three days a week.

Mrs Dent along with Mrs Doris Paton is the community language worker for the Yirruk-Tinnor Ganai Language Program, based with

Mrs Dent, Koorie Preschool Assistants and local community members conduct the language program in the preschools, supported and advised by a group of Elders.

Mrs Dent is employed to promote the importance of preschool programs for Koorie children and to encourage families and communities and support their children's participation in State Government funded preschools.

With her cousin Doris Paton, Mrs Dent produced a CD Rom to help teach the language program in preschools and schools and to encourage Aboriginal community members to share their dance, stories and art with the children.

The interactive *Nambur Ganai* CD Rom was launched a year ago and is based on Ms Dent's five years teaching the Ganai language program to Prep to Year 10 pupils at the Woolum Bellum KODE (Koorie Open Door Education) school at Morwell.

the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative at Bairnsdale.

In 1977, Mrs Dent received the inaugural Victorian Indigenous Women's Award for Culture and the Peter Clarke Teaching for Reconciliation (Koorie Teacher of the Year) award in 2000.

Mrs Dent is the State Representative on the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) at Northcote. She is also part of a Language Reference Group consisting of Elders-Ganai has a set of protocols, one of which is that the language is only taught by Koorie people.

Mrs Dent is the only accredited traditional LOTE (Language Other Than English) teacher in Victoria and has shared her knowledge with audiences around Australia.

- ◆ **For more information on the Ganai Language Program contact Mrs Dent on 5177 2615 or Mrs Doris Paton on 5120 4547**

CHANGES TO THE VACL COMMITTEE

The Committee and staff of VACL would like to farewell Mrs Sandra Smith.

Sandra has been on the Committee of management for the past seven years and has made significant contributions to the success of VACL and to the Victorian community language programs. We wish Sandra well with her future endeavours.

The VACL Committee and staff would like to take this opportunity to welcome Ms Vicki Couzens to the VACL board of management. We all look forward to working with Vicki over the next two years.



Photo: Mrs Sandra Smith

Members of the VACL Governing Committee

Mr John Atkinson **Chairperson**

Ms Doris Paton **Vice Chairperson**

Ms Lynne Dent **Secretary**

Ms Jill Gallagher **Treasurer**

Mr Bruce Pascoe

Mr Herb Patten

Ms Vicki Couzens

Members of the Committee can be contacted through this office

