# Kaurna Warra Karrpanthi

Chairperson: Zoey Bonney
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Re: Kaurna translations and requests for names etc.

## About the Kaurna language

The Kaurna language is the original language of the Adelaide Plains. It was last spoken on a daily basis roughly around the 1860s. Though speakers of the language undoubtedly survived long after that date, they had few opportunities to speak the language because of policies and practices that restricted the language and prohibited use in public.  Most of what we know of the Kaurna language comes from senior Kaurna men (Mullawirraburka, Kadlitpinna and others) who were recognised as leaders by the colonists in the 1830s. Their language was recorded by two German missionaries, Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann, between 1838 and 1857. A range of other observers recorded wordlists of varying length and quality, but Teichelmann and Schürmann were the only ones to write a Kaurna grammar. All in all, about 3,000 Kaurna words were recorded in historical sources. Some areas, such as body parts or verbs related to speaking, were fairly well documented, but there are many gaps.  It is likely there would have been at least 10,000 Kaurna words. However, we are not restricted to these 3,000 words, because quite a lot is known about how words were formed in Kaurna. The newly published _Kaurna Warrapiipa: Kaurna Dictionary_ contains an additional 400 new and repurposed words to fill in some of the gaps, following traditional Kaurna word formation processes. For instance, we now use _warraityati_ for 'telephone' (literally 'the voice sending thing'). For more information on the reawakening of the Kaurna language see  _Warraparna Kaurna_! _Reclaiming an Australian Language_ (Amery 2016) available as a free download.

## Kaurna Translations

No two languages ever have direct equivalents for all words in their vocabularies. However, it is much easier to translate two closely related languages because their semantic categories are much more closely aligned.  It is thus reasonably easy to translate from English to German or vice versa (or indeed Pitjantjatjara to Warlpiri). However, it is not so easy to translate Kaurna to English or vice versa. It is often reasonably easy to translate tangible entities such as body parts, artefacts, names of animals etc. as these often have direct equivalents. However, abstract concepts in English are extremely difficult to translate for two reasons. Firstly, abstract notions in Aboriginal languages are based around very different metaphors and conceptual notions than in English. Secondly, because European observers had insufficient exposure or knowledge of the language few Kaurna abstract nouns were recorded. They simply did not have time to get that far into the language.

In order to translate from English into Kaurna, it is best to rewrite the passage first into plain English and to think about the kinds of notions that are likely to have equivalent notions in Kaurna. We might need to look at things in a different way of expressing what we want to say. For instance, a translation of the notion of 'empty' into Kaurna is expressed as _pulthurni_ 'the appearance of the traces or signs of a former existence' (ie. it focuses on evidence that the container once contained a certain substance such as tea or sugar, but most of it is now gone). Similarly the verb 'to boil' is expressed as _tadli pudni pudnai_ 'the spit has arrived'. 'Disobedient' is expressed as _yuritina_ 'without ears' and so on.

**Naming protocols**

Kaurna people reserve the right to monitor where and how the Kaurna language is being used. It is important, therefore, to seek approval from Kaurna Elders for the right to use the language. Kaurna Warra Karrpanthi is keen to see the Kaurna language used as a means of promoting reconciliation, and we are keen to see the language being used again. In so doing, it is beginning to develop a life of its own and increase in vitality. The more it is used, the stronger it will become.

We expect that when people use words or phrases from the language, they will do so with respect. In taking something from the language, and in taking up our valuable time and effort in research and translation, it would be good if people would reciprocate and give something back to the language, to help it grow. In some cases, commercial concerns have made substantial donations, which have allowed us to run workshops and develop materials and with this reciprocal process the language will continue to grow strong.

**KWP and KWK**

Kaurna Warra Pintyanthi 'creating Kaurna language' (KWP) was established in 2002 by those actively engaged in teaching, developing and promoting the Kaurna language. Dr Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien and Dr Alitya Wallara Rigney served as signatories of KWP, whilst Dr Rob Amery was its convener. Monthly meetings were held and comprehensive minutes were maintained. KWP addressed numerous requests for Kaurna names, translations and information, provided direction for many Kaurna language projects, including the Kaurna Learner's Guide, Kaurna Dictionary and Kaurna Placenames research, and worked to promote and re-introduce the Kaurna language. KWP forged a MoU with the University of South Australia in 2003 and with the University of Adelaide in 2013, which amongst other things, committed the University to the ongoing teaching and research of the Kaurna language. KWP has always been an informal committee.

Kaurna Warra Karrpanthi 'supporting Kaurna language' (KWK) was formed in September 2013 and was incorporated as an Aboriginal organisation under the Office of Registrations of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) on 24 October 2013. As the name suggests, KWK works to support the ongoing Kaurna language projects.

Since Feb. 2015 regular monthly meetings have been held by KWK at Tauondi College to address requests for Kaurna names, translations etc. KWP now focuses on research and the production of Kaurna language resources, whilst KWK is engaged more with service delivery, offering Kaurna language workshops, facilitating the sale of Kaurna language resources and dealing with requests from the public. KWP and KWK are sister organisations and continue to work closely together and to complement each other.

**Find out more**
Tauondi Aboriginal College, Port Adelaide & Aldinga Payinthi College are currently running a Cert. ll 'Learning an Indigenous Language: Kaurna'. The University of Adelaide offers 'Reclaiming Languages: a Kaurna case study' and a Linguistics topic: 'Australian Indigenous Languages: Kaurna Focus'.

For further information, KWK and KWP contact details are below:

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