



Language and Spirit

Exploring Languages, Religions and
Spirituality in Australia Today

Edited by

Robyn Moloney · Shenouda Mansour

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Language and Spirit

“We never say it enough: Language cannot be ignored in trying to make sense of who we are as complex human beings. In this sensational volume, the editors convince us of the importance of multilingualism in our many and varied spiritual journeys. The structure of the book makes it a very original read, opening with beautiful personal narratives, and supplemented by stimulating research chapters. The book is already on my students’ list of compulsory readings!”

—Prof. Fred Dervin, *University of Helsinki, Finland*; Professor of Multicultural Education, Director of the TENSION Research Group (Diversities and Interculturality in Education)

“This is an extraordinary book addressing issues of language and spirituality, exploring beliefs, experiences and practices across languages and contexts. The book is the only one I have seen to work from indigenous languages to diasporic and community languages. Governments, researchers and teachers shy away from religious and spiritual aspects of language seeing language purely at a transactional level. But we learn and use languages to understand and express the ways we see the world. This volume is a ‘must-read’ for everyone interested in teaching or learning languages.”

—Prof Ken Cruickshank, Director, *Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education, University of Sydney*

“The intersections of language, religion and identity are of vital importance to questions of language maintenance and use in a multilingual world. Blending scholarly research studies with personal narratives, and diaspora voices with Indigenous voices, the editors and contributors to this volume have opened up an exciting new research agenda on the linguistic lives of those to whom spirituality matters.”

—Professor Phil Benson Professor of Applied Linguistics and Director of the *Multilingualism Research Centre, Macquarie University*

“This is a compelling volume. It successfully crosses boundaries in approaches to research and writing and invites readers to cross boundaries in relation to languages, cultures and faith. It focuses on language as that most powerful resource for discovering the world and the self. It offers voices which capture the

intercultural exchange of meanings – Indigenous people, non-indigenous people and those living in diaspora in Australia. Writers offer their reflections, indeed wisdom, as they engage to better understand others and themselves. The work provides a mirror with which we can reference our own stories as we too consider critically the way we live reciprocally with others to achieve a more equitable and peaceful world.”

—Angela Scarino 7 September 2021 Director, *Research Centre for Languages & Cultures, UniSA Justice and Society University of South Australia*

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Foreword

Language and Spirit is a substantial volume of living voices describing personal and collective experiences of the intersection of language, religion, identity and spirituality. It is very much today. This is not a history or the stories of others from far away in time and place. These are Australian stories from Indigenous, migrant, multigenerational settler and other voices. Voices come from recognisable religious traditions, others from less well known and some from no traditional religious affiliation, demonstrating the core intersections examined and displayed here in highly diverse socio-cultural locations. The editors are to be commended for the careful way they have curated what they have been given so as to protect authenticity and promote availability. In this Preface I offer some reflections on the intersection of language, religion and spirituality.

There is no community without language, and identities are formed through interaction requiring language. Differences among communities are marked by linguistic differences, identity markers, argot, and dialect. Identities grow out of, are expressed through, and celebrated in our storytelling. We develop our identities largely through hearing ourselves described by others, and in listening to our responses to those around us. These processes are language dependent.

We know we belong when we can understand others and make ourselves understood. Shared understandings are core to feeling part of the story of the family, group or society. Again, this requires shared languages.

Each religion has its own language and its own understanding of communication with the divine, or the spirit. Each has a language that both enshrines and makes available to the trained eye and ear the deep wisdom of each tradition.

Spirituality – our relation with that which is deeply within us, which accompanies us closely on our way, and is ever more than us – may occur in prelinguistic experiences of awe, or wonder, a sense of presence, or a deep welling of joy or love. However, we cannot share or validate such experiences without language. Even in just remembering such experiences we use language to form the memory, to tell ourselves our story. As I noted in 2006 (Bouma, 2006) whatever secularisation theories predicted, spirituality is not on the decline, and religion is growing in strength and presence in the public sphere increasingly in the twenty-first century.

Cultures vary greatly in the language provided to apprehend the spiritual. Post-enlightenment western language and thought have made decreasing room for such thinking and speaking. Part of secularisation and disenchantment has been the dismissal and denigration of language once used. The removal of language is a critically effective way to dismantle a culture and society. Witness the deliberate policies denying Indigenous children access to their languages.

It is possible to have an experience for which there is no language, but it is impossible to share it and it is difficult to retain the memory. Only when there is language can an experience, either group or individual, become part of culture, part of a group's story. I have had a number of profound experiences in my early childhood which I reappropriated much later when language about near death experiences became available. There is no doubt that I had certain experiences, but I had not been able to share them, or even describe them to myself, although I kept the image and feelings fresh in my memory. Language allowed a different mode of savouring experiences.

Every group has a story and those seeking to join a group will hear the story told in many different ways. Not all of them are explicit, many are

implicit, in phrases, references to events or persons, and explanations about why things are done in certain ways. Part of the process of becoming accepted is to learn the group's story, but also how to tell it, and to tell it in a way that the person is located in the group and its story.

The ways language, identity, religion and spirituality work together and intersect vary across societies. What is true in Azerbaijan is not true in Australia, neither are Britain and Australia the same (Bouma, 2016). Australia is one of, if not the most diverse nation in the world, and is unique in the degree, composition and history of its diversity (Bouma & Halafoff, 2017). According to the 2016 Census, Australia has six substantial religious communities maintaining distinctive places of worship shops and schools – Muslims and Buddhists at 2.5%, Hindus at 2%, Sikhs and Jews at 0.5%. Only Catholics at 23% and Anglicans at 13% are more numerous than these. A plethora of other religious communities from Indigenous, to Lutherans, to Mormons, to Scientologists increase the nuance and diversity of the religio-spiritual offerings. Even when taken together, Christians failed to form a majority in most Australian States and Territories. Each of these communities uses and maintains different cultures, languages, histories, stories, rituals and associations. Australia's multicultural policies and practices facilitate respectful interaction among communities enriching the parts as well as the whole.

Many social and political theories ignore these underlying diversities in the search for universally applicable understandings or 'best practice' policies. Any approach that does not start with careful attention to the diverse personal realities in place is doomed to mislead. Australian attachment to religion and spirituality is often compared with that of the United States, in discussing for example, apparently low church attendance. Such comparisons incorrectly make the situation in one society somehow normative for another, a vestige of colonialism. While inequalities and dissonance still mark the society, much local writing suggests that Australians are moving towards pleasure, if not occasional pride in being part of one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world.

The ties between language, culture, religion and identity are as delicate and nuanced, as they are diverse. They are held close to the inner quiet of a person, even when subject to reflection. Seldom are they trumpeted about. They become 'shy hopes held tenderly in the heart' (Bouma, 2006)

to paraphrase Manning Clark. This is one of the best definitions of the personal 'sacred'. It is protected from scrutiny and critique, due to its vulnerability and profound uniqueness to each. Old notions of totalising identities, or mass conformity probably never accurately described Australians, but they certainly do not do so now.

Personal accounts like many in this book, of navigating life and diversity, especially among Australian teens, reveal myriad ways of making meaning, ethical judgements and seeing the world. Two research projects (Singleton et al., 2021; Halafoff et al., 2020) of which I have been part depict this rich diversity, this process of negotiating the welter of choices, challenges and opportunities. Only a few are traditionally religious, and they are discerning their choices not being defined by denomination or religious identity. Most, including many of the 52% who declare they have 'no religion' are open to and/or practice forms of spirituality.

This book testifies to the rich diversity of the religio-spiritual domain. It resists deconstruction of what is encountered, experienced and then expressed. It resolutely avoids reductionism, and is largely clear of the binaries that have for so long burdened and blinkered careful examination, acceptance of what is there and language about it. The book is largely free of imposed theories and ideologies.

This book is full of research, reporting, personal stories and recounting of the roles that language plays in shaping identity, navigating intercultural relationships, travel, growing up, learning to listen intently to others. Our use and management of language forges relationships, defines how we sit with others and either builds connection and respect, or walls of difference and disrespect. A confident grasp of one's own story sets a foundation for openness to diversity, to others' ways of being. Intercultural literacy rising from respectful resting with and listening to others is the basis for a successful society.

Language and Spirit: Exploring languages, religion and spirituality in Australia today takes the reader into the wonderful world of today's Australia. Let no one say that religion is dead, spirituality is vacuous, or language is withering. This book provides rich evidence to the contrary. Enjoy.

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The contributors to this book, from many origins, have written in homes, schools, offices and coffee shops in cities, rural towns, on the Traditional Country of many First Nations across Australia. In the spirit of Reconciliation, we acknowledge and pay respect to all past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of the lands on which we have gathered and of this nation, and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acknowledgements Page

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Contents

Part I	1
1 Introduction: Language, Identity and Spirituality	3
<i>Robyn Moloney and Father Shenouda Mansour</i>	
2 Living Spiritualities on Country	27
<i>Robyn Moloney</i>	
3 Living Faiths Section 1 (Buddhism and Christianity)	57
<i>Robyn Moloney</i>	
4 Introduction: Living Faiths Section 2: Hinduism, Islam, Judaism	93
<i>Robyn Moloney</i>	
5 The Front Line: Teaching Language and Spirit	125
<i>Robyn Moloney</i>	

Part II	153
6 Aboriginal Language and Spirituality Within the Context of Riddim and Poetry: A Creative School Program	155
<i>Devrim Yilmaz and Michael Jarrett</i>	
7 Many Members, One Body: A Multilingual Church in Central Australia	177
<i>David Moore</i>	
8 Why Should We Sing to the Sharks? Language Reclamation and Indigenous Wellbeing	197
<i>Ghil'ad Zuckermann</i>	
9 Multilingualism and Religion in a Multicultural Australia	217
<i>James Forrest</i>	
10 A Framework for the Revitalisation of the Coptic Language in the Twenty-First Century	237
<i>Father Shenouda Mansour and Ounas Gerges</i>	
11 Language and Religion in the Lives of Two Transnational Sojourners	263
<i>Lisa Gilanyi</i>	
12 Hakha Chin Language in Melbourne: A Marker of Cultural and Spiritual Identity	287
<i>Salai Biak Za Lian Ching, Alistair Welsh, and Ramon Lopez Castellano</i>	
13 Christian Bilingual Practices and Hybrid Identities as Vehicles of Migrant Integration	307
<i>Yining Wang and Ingrid Piller</i>	

14	The Intersection of Hebrew, Judaism and Jewish Spirituality	327
	<i>Zehavit Gross and Suzanne D. Rutland</i>	
15	The Impact of Learning Language and Culture on Adolescents' Identity Formation, Enculturation and Socialisation: A Case Study of a Pluralistic Faith-Based School	351
	<i>Yona Gilead</i>	
16	Journey into Indian Spirituality: A Westerner Perspective	375
	<i>Chantal Crozet</i>	
17	Some Final Words on Languages and Religion: Peacebuilding, Personal Reflections and Professional Problems	391
	<i>Joseph Lo Bianco</i>	
	Index	413

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Aunty Louise Campbell is from Gumbayngirr country, northern New South Wales, and is part of the Stolen Generation. Her grandmother and mother spoke a number of languages fluently. As a child she understood and spoke language but when she and her brothers were removed, they lost it. She trained and worked as a teacher, and then gained a Law degree at the University of New South Wales. She used that study to work for the NSW Aboriginal Land Council in the 1980s. She now works for the Catholic Education office, in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

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Swati Doshi is currently working as a Hindi Language teacher with IABBV Hindi School in Sydney and has been at the school for four years

now. Swati speaks three languages and understands a couple more. Though Gujarati is her mother tongue, she loves and respects all languages. She also works as a Project Officer with (SICLE) Sydney Institute for Community Languages and Education, through the University of Sydney. Swati serves the community as a volunteer coordinator of the Indian Cultural Group at the Mosaic Multicultural Centre, in Willoughby City Council, and is also a member of the Management team of an organisation working for the differently abled.

Jaroslav Duma OAM is currently the Honorary Consul of Ukraine in Sydney, and an active member of the Australian-Ukrainian community to which he has devoted most of his life through a myriad of “volunteer” positions in various community organisations. He is committed to his family, especially to his wife Mary, and has two married sons, all of whom are also active community members. Jaroslav places much emphasis on the importance of mentoring young people in values of community – espousing that “it takes a village to raise a child”, not just an education.

Craig Duncan is a proud Gamilaraay man and works at the Catholic Education office, in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, working on Aboriginal Education policy and content. He has completed the Masters of Indigenous Language Education at the University of Sydney, and is planning PhD study. Craig believes that the value of Indigenous languages is now being increasingly recognised, and is an opportunity for all Aboriginal people who are interested in language, to revitalise and to speak language.

James Forrest is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Geography and Planning at Macquarie University, Sydney. For two decades, he has been researching racism in Australia as a member of the Challenging Racism project based at Western Sydney University. More recently, he has focused on the integration of Australian immigrants, most recently refining that focus to one aspect of immigrant integration: to geolinguistics, the geography and sociology of multilingualism in Australia. Here, he contributes towards extending this research into a hitherto neglected area, the role of religious involvement in heritage language maintenance.

Ounas Gerges is a teacher and advocate for the Coptic language. Since his childhood he has been taught Coptic language by a renowned Coptic language scholar. Coptic language is his first spoken language. He has taught it for over 30 years in churches to deacons, priests and the Coptic community and is a senior lecturer at St Cyril's Coptic Orthodox Theological College. He is a member of an online forum whose purpose is to revive and teach the language, and also to form Coptic words that may not be found in the Coptic vocabulary. Ounas is an avid skier.

Lisa Gilanyi is a researcher in the School of Education at the University of New South Wales. She is passionate about exploring the different ways that individuals develop and express their identities through language. Her research interests include language learning and use in permanent and temporary migration, first and second language literacy development, language choice in bilingual families, and the role of language and literacy in participation (or exclusion) in society.

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John Hajek is Professor of Italian Studies and Director of the Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-cultural Communication (RUMACCC) at the University of Melbourne. He was born and raised in an ethnically mixed family in the western suburbs of Melbourne, where few spoke English at home and life for migrant families centred around the extended family – with little interaction outside it or their ethnic communities. Through his academic work, he remains committed to supporting and understanding all aspects of multicultural life in Australia.

John Harris has had a lifelong interest in Aboriginal people and holds a PhD in Aboriginal languages. He retired as Director of Translation in Bible Society Australia. He continues working with Indigenous people in translating the Christian Bible, particularly into endangered languages. These new texts model the way the language was spoken, thus becoming a tool for their revival. John is the author of *One Blood*, his award-winning study of Christianity in Aboriginal Australia. He was awarded the prestigious Lambeth Doctor of Divinity by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Her Majesty the Queen for his ‘advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal people’.

Harumi Hayakawa is a teacher and writer. She teaches Japanese language and culture. She writes for Japanese media. She was born and bred in a suburb of Tokyo. Her childhood hero was Robinson Crusoe. After traveling to many places, she settled in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales. She enjoys living there and spending time in natural settings. She describes herself as spiritual rather than religious. For a long time, she felt there was conflict between science and spirituality. However, after her mother passed away, this conflict dissolved. Truth can be expressed in different ways.

Abdullah Ibrahim is presently an Indonesian teacher at the New South Wales School of Languages where he has taught for 15 years. Born in New Zealand to monolingual parents he has spent most of his life in Australia working in both Brisbane and Sydney. He has an Indonesian wife and four children and is constantly busy with school work.

Michael Jarrett is a Gumbaynggirr Man from Nambucca Heads (Nyambaga), northern New South Wales. He began formal learning in 1997 when he attended Gumbaynggirr language classes at Muurrbay Language Centre. Michael has completed the Masters in Indigenous Languages Education, University of Sydney. The degree made Gumbaynggirr come alive through phonology, syntax, grammar and semantics and he is now a confident speaker. He works as an educator in different contexts, and has produced resources for the New South Wales Board of Studies, the Department of Education, Muurrbay language centre, universities and other language organisations.

Rabbi Zalman Kastel AM is National Director of the multi-faith based Together for Humanity Foundation that fosters Intercultural Understanding in Schools. Rabbi Kastel was raised in the “ultra-orthodox” Chasidic tradition in the racially divided Crown Heights area of Brooklyn New York. He saw the world through the lens of his absolute tradition and the narrative of his community. This changed in 2001, when encounters with Christians and Muslims transformed him. He has embraced others as he learned their stories and cultural terminology, while engaged in helping 400,000 Australian to embrace others.

Kayleen Kerwin is a proud Paakantyi woman from Wilcannia, western New South Wales. She heard a lot of language from Elders when she was growing up, but there was no language taught. Now, only five people speak the language fluently, so it is regarded as endangered. She teaches Paakantyi at the Menindee Central School, to all students. Kayleen has contributed to professional development for other teachers, and to the production of resources. Paakantyi recorded stories are held by at the NSW State Library stories, Museum of Contemporary Art, and in the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens.

Tamara Kotoyan is a twenty-four-year-old recent graduate from the University of Sydney, gaining a degree in Bachelor of Arts and Commerce, majoring in Government and International Politics and Commercial law. She is a proud Armenian, having grown up in the Armenian Australian community, where she has taken up volunteer roles in her local church and community organisations. She has worked as an English tutor for

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Jianlian Liang is a teacher and Curriculum Coordinator at the International Chinese School in Sydney, where she has been a staff member since 2020. Before that she taught in government schools for 9 years. Jianlian completed her PhD at Macquarie University and her undergraduate studies at University of Auckland, New Zealand. She has collaborated actively with researchers in other disciplines of language and identity, language and faith, bilingual education, CLIL (Content and language integrated learning). Jianlian has authored a number of scholarly chapters and articles, and has presented at a number of international conferences and workshops.

Salai Biak Za Lian Ching is a final-year PhD student in Sociolinguistic studies at Deakin University in Australia. His doctoral research investigates minority community language shift and maintenance, habitual language use in social domains (home and family, friendship, church and community organisations and social media), code-switching, minority language policy, language status and language attitudes. He received his MA in Translating and Interpreting Studies at RMIT University. In his minor thesis, he explored medical terminology rendition techniques employed by professional Hakha Chin / English interpreters.

Joseph Lo Bianco is Professor Emeritus in the Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne Australia. He is a specialist in minority language rights, literacy and social opportunity, multilingualism, language policy and peacebuilding. In recent years he has been engaged by UNESCO and UNICEF in Southeast Asian settings to lead language policy research and writing teams, for which he devised a method of facilitated dialogue. In 1987 he authored Australia's first national language policy, between 1990 and 2002 was Director of Language Australia/ The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia.

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Father Shenouda Mansour is an ordained priest of the Coptic Orthodox Church. He came to Australia from Egypt at the age of 6. His PhD investigated attitudes to identity, culture and language in a Coptic school community. He is the General Secretary of NSW Ecumenical Council, a body which strives to build good relationships, break barriers, and to build networking with churches. He has ongoing interest in identity, culture, language, religious and spiritual formation. He is the director of Coptic Orthodox Community Outreach Service, and is a regular radio program producer. He believes in being a social activist to build a better society.

Aunty Diane McNaboe is a proud Wiradjuri woman. Her father was Wiradjuri (Dubbo area) and her mother was Gamilaraay Nation (Moree area). Diane teaches Wiradjuri language at Dubbo College, Delroy Campus. She has been teaching language and culture for over 30 years on Country. She has trained many others to teach, with currently 24 school programs operating. Diane has promoted bilingual signage in her town, in the town's biodiversity gardens, in government offices and in schools.

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teacher for schools which have both primary and secondary Korean language programs.

Mala Mehta OAM is the President/Honorary Founder IABBV Hindi School. She has pursued a career of voluntary teaching of the Hindi language promoting music, dance and theatre. In 2006 Mala became the first Indian woman to be awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for community service through establishing the IABBV Hindi School and providing assistance to new migrants. She received the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award (2015) from the President of India in acknowledgement of her achievement in the field of Education and Community Service and in recognition of her contribution to promoting India and fostering the interests of overseas Indians.

Venerable Miaoyou is a Buddhist Nun based at the Nan Tien Temple, near Wollongong, New South Wales. Her role in the Temple is Special Projects Coordinator including the construction and early development of the Nan Tien institute (Australia's first Buddhist institute of higher learning) of which she is Director and Company Secretary. Her passion is education and meditation and she believes that the Buddhist discipline can change lives for the better. She is also passionate about community engagement and interfaith dialogues and she believes in working with other religious leaders and organisations to promote peace and harmony

Robyn Moloney is a languages educator. She taught French, German and Japanese in schools for many years and following this, moved to the role of a lecturer and teacher educator at Macquarie University, Sydney, for ten years. Her doctoral study, and subsequent research, investigated students' and teachers' intercultural learning through language. Her many book and journal publications have covered aspects of classroom practice and professional development within learning and teaching. As an Honorary Senior Lecturer, she now acts as an educational consultant, working with schools to develop understanding of the intercultural capability in the curriculum and broader school environment.

David Moore is a linguist, interpreter, translator and educator based in Alice Springs of the Northern Territory of Australia. His PhD thesis

‘German Lutheran missionaries and the linguistic description of Central Australian languages 1890–1910’ was completed at the University of Western Australia in 2019. Initially working as a layworker and Bible translator for Finke River Mission in the Alyawarr language, he has recently worked as an interpreter and forensic linguist in the Alyawarr and Anmatjerr languages in courts and tribunals of Central Australia and has recently taught courses in the Arrernte language at the Alice Springs Language Centre.

Dich Dao Muc lived for many years in Australia but is currently is a lecturer at the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City. Dich Dao Muc does research in Vietnamese language of the Vietnamese Australian community, Vietnamese phonetics and Second language acquisition.

Corina Wayali Norman is a Dharug/Dharawal woman with deep connections to multiple clanal Countries. She also has links to Te-atiahu nui a paparangi te iwi in Whanganui, New Zealand. Corina has an interest in respectful memorialisation. Her dedication to culture and broader First Peoples culture is evident in her ways of seeking opportunities for their voices to be heard and respected. In her words, “truth telling and sharing all things pertaining to our culture, connections and responsibilities to ngurra as-Country and to each other.” She facilitates cultural knowledge and practices, weaving in Traditional culture and protocol into a contemporary framework.

Ingrid Piller is Distinguished Professor of Applied Linguistics at Macquarie University. Her research expertise is in intercultural communication, language learning, multilingualism, and bilingual education. She is the author of the multi-award-winning *Linguistic Diversity and Social Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2016), the bestselling *Intercultural Communication* (Edinburgh University Press, 2nd ed., 2017), and numerous other publications. She serves as editor-in-chief of the international sociolinguistics journal *Multilingua* (De Gruyter Mouton) and edits the web portal *Language on the Move*. She tweets about linguistic diversity @lg_on_the_move.

Zainab Taylor Rizvi is a devoted servant of Allah, who has spent her life serving the community. Zainab lives out the meaning of philanthropist, in the literal term of ‘the love of humanity’, by spending her free time giving back to youth and community when and where support is needed. Zainab provides educational Islamic lectures to youth and women. She also works full time with the NSW Department of Education as a Student Learning Support Officer in a Primary Support Unit, working mostly with autistic children, and is also studying for a Diploma of Community Services.

Judit Rubinstein is a Hebrew teacher and coordinator at various public schools working for the Board of Jewish Education. She was involved in the writing of the Hebrew curriculum for primary schools and she is a leader in the development of resources and the selection of Hebrew textbooks for all levels. Judit provides professional development for teachers and she helps them with lesson planning and student assessments. Judit grew up in a small Jewish town in Argentina which inspired her to take her on Hebrew language studies and to participate in Hebrew Bible competitions from an early age.

Suzanne D. Rutland OAM, BA (Hons), MA (Hons), PhD, Dip Ed., is Professor Emerita in the Department of Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies, University of Sydney. She specializes in Australian Jewish history, the Holocaust, Israel and Jewish education. Her book, *Let My People Go: The Untold Story of Australia and Soviet Jews, 1959—1989*, co-written with Sam Lipski, was the joint winner of the 2016 Prime Minister’s Literary Award [Australian History]. Her latest book, co-authored with Professor Zehavit Gross, is *Special Religious Education in Australia and its Value to Contemporary Society* (Springer). She is a member of the Australian expert delegation for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Milind Sathye is Professor of Banking and Finance at the University of Canberra. His interest in western and eastern philosophy dates back to many years. He delivers talks in the philosophy and religion programs of the Bhashma Institute of Indic Studies, India, the Nan Tien Institute, Wollongong and the Hindu Council of Australia.

Nathan Schreiber teaches Gunggay language, at the Yarrabah State School, north of Cairns, Queensland. Nathan creates all the programs and resources from the ground up, including the groundwork of putting the endangered language together, in order to teach it. Nathan was raised close to his grandmother and remembers listening and learning from her. He describes his language learning as like a big jigsaw puzzle, finding the pieces and how they fit together. Nathan has completed a Masters of Indigenous language Education (MILE) at University of Sydney.

Susitina Suli is a Tongan-Australian woman navigating Western and Tongan culture. She is the daughter of Uniting Church minister Rev. Charissa Suli and Langi Suli and is the eldest of four children. She is currently studying a Bachelor of Social Science majoring in Psychology at Western Sydney University and is the Children and Youth Worker at Willoughby and Northbridge Uniting Church of North Sydney. She enjoys working and engaging with people of all faiths and all walks of life and enjoys spending time with family and friends.

Matagi Vilitama is a Mission and Leadership Presbytery Minister of the Georges River Presbytery of the Uniting Church. He came to Australia in 2008 and is committed both to the support of Niuen culture and to cross-cultural ministry. He is the advocate for the Multicultural Circle of Interest in the Assembly of the Uniting church. He has composed over 50 songs for church service. He is passionate about Niuen identity and faith, carried though his language.

Yining Wang is currently an honorary post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. Her research areas cover bilingual education, multilingualism, and Chinese immigrant religion. She completed her PhD at Macquarie University in 2020. Her PhD thesis examines the heritage language maintenance of Chinese migrant children in Australia.

Trish Watts is a Singer/Songwriter, a registered Voice Movement Therapy Practitioner, a Performing Artist, Educator and Community Choir Director. Believing passionately that ‘Every life can SING’, she specializes in voicing who we truly are. Her life work is anchored in the bedrock of ‘play’ and she celebrates 30 years as co-founder of InterPlay

Australia- a community arts practice. Trish has travelled Australia, the UK, Europe, USA, India, South Africa and Cambodia, as artist, teacher, performer and facilitator. She is a published songwriter and recording artist with Willow Publishing: www.willowpublishing.com.au

Alistair Welsh is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Deakin University in Australia. His research interests are interdisciplinary and relate to socio-linguistic research involving identity and discourse. He has published in interdisciplinary fields ranging from intercultural issues in educational contexts to analysis of Indonesian political discourse.

Teuku Chalidin Yacob is a leader of the Muslim community, especially among the Indonesian and Malay communities of Australia. He has lectured in numerous Islamic associations of various Australian Universities. Dr Chalidin Yacob attained a Masters and PhD degree in Islamic Education from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Since arriving in Australia, Dr Chalidin has acted in many cities as an Imam, and he founded Ashabul Kahfi Islamic Centre in 1998. He is currently a member of ANIC (Australian National Imam Council), a Shariah Advisor for AFIC (Australian Federation Islamic Council) and a chairman for DMDI (the Malay and Islamic World) Australia chapter.

Devrim Yilmaz is a lecturer in the School of Education at the University of New England. He teaches postgraduate units in the English, Literacies and Language Education, and Contextual Studies teams. He also supervises master's, EdD and PhD students. Some of the units he teaches are Society, Language and Culture, Linguistics for Language Teachers, and Teaching for Cultural Diversity. His research interests include dialectology of South Eastern European dialects of Turkish; etymology of common words and phrases in South Eastern European languages; Indigenous languages of Australia; and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Archbishop Mar Meelis Zaia is the Metropolitan of the Assyrian Church of the East, Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon. The church is a member of the National Council of Churches in Australia, and the Ecumenical Council of New South Wales. He is head of the Assyrian community of over 27,000 in NSW and over 7000 in Victoria.

He was appointed bishop for the newly established diocese of Sydney and arrived in Sydney in March 1985. He was consecrated Metropolitan in 2008 by HH Mar Dinkha IV Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East. He is co-chair of the Catholic Church and Assyrian Church Dialogue Committee.

Ghil'ad Zuckermann is Chair of Linguistics and Endangered Languages at the University of Adelaide. He is a chief investigator in a large research project assessing language revival and mental health, funded by Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). He is the founder of Revivalistics, a new trans-disciplinary field of enquiry surrounding language reclamation, revitalization and reinvigoration. In 2011 he launched, with the Barngarla Aboriginal communities of Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, the reclamation of the Barngarla language. Professor Zuckermann is elected member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL).