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## Embracing Gamilaraay Language Revival in Early Learning Programs

Warrumbungle Shire Council Children's Services, specifically Yuluwirri Kids, is proudly participating in the *Yaama Gamilaraay!* project.

"This is a community-driven initiative dedicated to reawakening the Gamilaraay language in local early childhood programs," said Warrumbungle Shire Council Mayor Councillor Ambrose Doolan. "The project, led by the Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Gunnedah, aims to revitalise the traditional language of the Gamilaraay people within the early years, fostering cultural identity and connection for young children and their families."

"Children's Services began the project in Term 4 last year, which involves weekly online lessons, monthly visits from a language facilitator plus resources and training for the educators to integrate the language and cultural practices across the curriculum," said Cr Doolan.

On Friday 16 February 2024, the preschoolers at both campuses received their first visit of the year with Language Facilitator, Renee Houldsworth and Linguist Dr Hilary Smith. The focus this month is on greetings so educators and children gathered together to play cultural games and participate in art activities to assist with learning the Gamilaraay greetings: Yaama (hello), Yaluu (Goodbye) and Mailyaa (friend).

The program provides resources such as the classic children's book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (or *Gararrngan Yuulngin-ban.gaan*), and crayons featuring the colour names in both Gamilaraay and English.

"Warrumbungle Children's Services' participation in the *Yaama Gamilaraay!* project demonstrates their commitment to fostering cultural understanding and inclusivity within the early childhood sector. By providing young children with opportunities to learn and engage with the Gamilaraay language, the educators can encourage the wonder of Indigenous knowledge and support Aboriginal children's sense of identity and belonging," said Cr Doolan.

The *Yaama Gamilaraay!* project is funded by the New South Wales Department of Education's *Ninganah No More* program and has already seen success in early childhood centres around the region.

"It is wonderful to see our younger generation getting an opportunity like this within our local community and it is exciting to see the children grow and develop as the *Yaama Gamilaraay!* Project progresses throughout 2024," Cr Doolan concluded.

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Photo L-R: Linguist Dr Hilary Smith, Winanga-Li Account Manager, Vibeke Williams, WSC Connect Five Coordinator, Kelly Murnane, WSC Educator, Jamie Richards, Winanga-Li Language Facilitator, Renee Houldsworth.