

# Vocabulary

### Aboriginal Vocabulary

**Many attempts have been made to record Aboriginal languages.**



This has been done generally by non-Aboriginal people who have little understanding of the complex vocabulary and grammar that belongs to Aboriginal languages. This has often caused problems in the translation and spelling of recorded language.

For example k is widely used when discussing the Kamilaroi language group from the lower St George (Queensland) / Moree (NSW) area. This however has also been recorded a Yualaroi, Yuallaroi, Yularoi, Euahlayi and even Uralaici. Generally speaking there is no sharp distinction between the sounds of k and g or between p and b. To add to the confusion some similar sounding words from different language groups may mean completely different things.

In English, there is only one word for we and for you. In almost all Aboriginal languages we and you has a different word depending on the number of people being talked about. Therefore different situations make different words. The complexity of kin and family relationships is emphasised by the way people are categorised in language. These can include names for: Sister, brother, sister's brother, brother's sister, brother's brother, sister's sister, brother's brother's brother, sister's sister's sister, brother's brother's sister, brother's sister's brother.

A further barrier to recording Aboriginal language involves a person's own language group. Often this particular language will have different forms for different or special purposes.

The grammar usually remains the same but the vocabulary will differ involving sounds that are not normally used in every day life.

In many language groups a special language is used when talking to particular relatives. There are also special languages used during ceremonies and when discussing sacred and important matters by initiated men and older women.

Language was also used as a form of social control in Aboriginal societies. It would be used in various forms depending on the ages and status of people within a language group.