



17 Oct 2017  
West Australian, Perth

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Page 1 of 11



**The West Australian**

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OCTOBER 17, 2017

OCEANS NEED OUR HELP. **P3**

KIDS CREATE FUTURE POWER NETWORK. **P6**

PRINT YOUR OWN REUSABLE BAG. **P8**

**Noongar talking**

**Noongar Waangkiny**

FIND OUT HOW YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HELPING TO KEEP THE NOONGAR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ALIVE



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Page 2 of 11

# A rich and ancient LANGUAGE

Kaya noonakoort — hello everyone. Noongar is the ancient and official language of the Aboriginal people of South West WA.

**Lisa Quartermain** looks at how young people are keeping Noongar language and culture alive.

In the quiet surrounds of Black Adder Creek in Perth's foothills, Noongar language is heard loud and proud.

It is assembly day at Moorditj Noongar Community College, Middle Swan, and the kindy to Year 6 students begin with the school song — sung in Noongar and translated to English — followed by the National Anthem.

The ritual is a harmonious blend of the rich and ancient language and culture and the reality of modern times. Everyday Noongar words — spoken or sung — are heard at Moorditj because the language is taught in every class. If it's someone's birthday, students sing Happy Birthday in Noongar and, on special days such as Anzac Day, Noongar songs are played or performed.

The school's passion for language will soon be shared with the wider community as Year 5/6 students

put the finishing touches on their own Noongar-English alphabet dictionary, illustrated with their own drawings, which they plan to publish as a picture book.

"It's the preservation of a priceless treasure, not just for indigenous peoples but for everyone," teacher Narelle Ryder said.

Noongar language teacher Roma "Nan" Winmar, an accomplished author and artist, guides the students, teachers and parents to use song and activities that embed key Noongar vocabulary and phrases in a fun environment.

"It is really complex, so learning through song is a marvellous way of doing things," Nan

said.

Every day begins with a ride on the school bus because the college provides a service to transport students to and from school, from Midland and surrounding suburbs.

Aboriginal artwork is prominent around the school, which opened in 2001 and has 80 students, and the design of the buildings reflects symbolic aspects of Aboriginal culture.

## HISTORY OF NOONGAR

Noongar was originally an oral language, meaning the first people of the South West communicated through speech, not the written word. Young people learnt about everything — history, law, tradition, geography, food and family — from elders who passed down knowledge verbally.



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It wasn't until European settlement that written recordings of Noongar were made. Navigator Matthew Flinders made the first word list in the early 1800s and Robert Lyon, a white settler and early advocate for indigenous rights in the Swan River Colony, recorded information about the people from the warrior Yagan when the Whadjuk Noongar leader was incarcerated on Carnac Island, off Fremantle.

It is generally agreed there was no single, standard Noongar language and that the dialects of a closely related range of languages merged into Noongar.

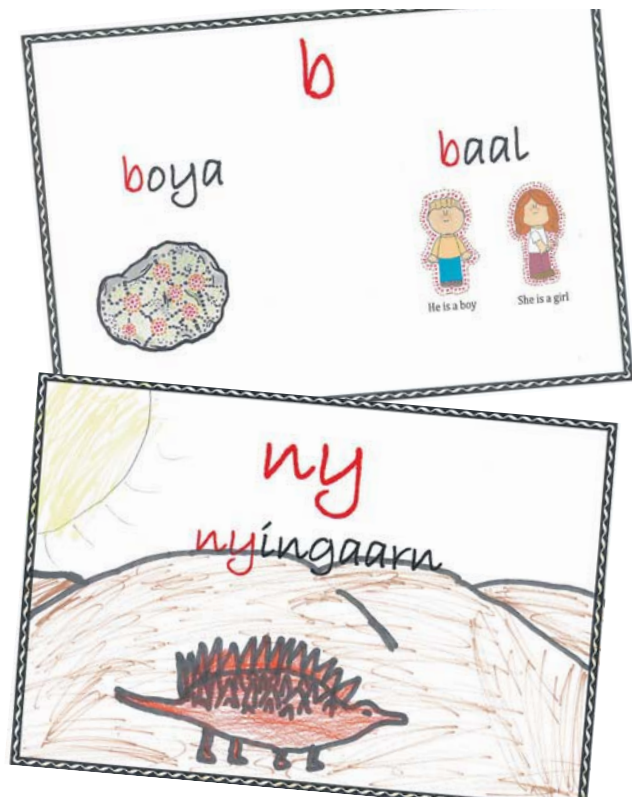
During the mid-1980s and late 1990s, Noongar elders — including Moorditj teacher Roma Winmar — and their

families took part in a series of special meetings to discuss the endangered state of Noongar, and to document the language and develop a Noongar language course and dictionary.

The first Noongar Language and Culture Centre was established through the Bunbury Aboriginal Progress Association in 1986. Today, the Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation (NBLC) in Bunbury has a vast range of educational material and creates dictionaries, grammar guides and books.

Walyalup Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Fremantle runs regular activities, including language lessons, and Langford Aboriginal Association is another strong organisation that runs language classes and cultural activities.

"Nan" Winmar is also part of the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project, which produces illustrated books in Noongar language.





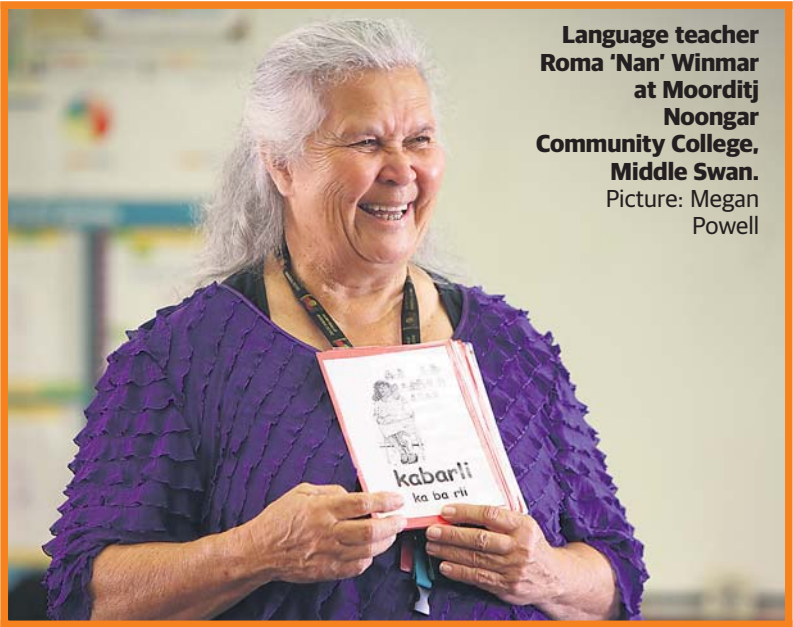


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## PLACE NAMES WITH NOONGAR MEANINGS

Yallingup, Cowaramup, Balingup, Dwellingup . . . these well-known South West towns all end with the suffix “up”, which in Noongar means “place of”.

Some Noongar place names in Perth are Balga (meaning grass tree), Booragoon (lower reaches of Canning River), Nollamara (red and green kangaroo paw), Gidgegannup (place where spears are made), Koondoola (emu), Mirrabooka (Southern Cross constellation), Joondalup (place of whiteness or glistening), Karawara (green), Marangaroo (blue flowers) and Karrinyup (swamp).

Many names for rivers, mountains and parks are also indigenous language words. Noticing these words is the first step to generate a greater appreciation and respect for the significance of the language.

## THREE MAIN DIALECTS

While 14 language groups within Noongar country were identified during the late 1930s, there are now considered to be three main dialects:

- **Djiraly wongki** – northern dialect is spoken around Perth and on the coastal plain north to the Moore River, inland to New Norcia and east to the Wheatbelt.
- **Kongal-marawar wongki** – south-western dialect can be heard around Murray River east to Kojonup and south to Augusta.
- **Kongal-boyal wongki** – south-eastern dialect is used from Denmark and Albany in the far south, east to Esperance and Ravensthorpe and north through the Wheatbelt.

*Check out some examples of Noongar dialect variations*

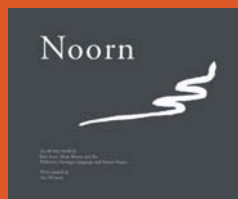
English	Northern	South-western	South-eastern
Spear	Kidji	Kitj	Kitja
Woman	Yaku	Yaka	Yok
Tooth	Ngarlku	Ngorlka	Ngorlak
Witchety grub	Bardi	Berda	Bert



## BOOKS BASED ON NOONGAR LANGUAGE

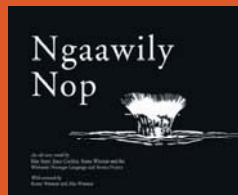
### Noorn (Snake)

An old story retold by Kim Scott, Ryan Brown and the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project, with artwork by Alta Winmar, will soon be released by UWA Press. The bilingual picture book about a grandfather who secretly befriends a snake is written in Noongar with English translations and the stories are also available in audio.



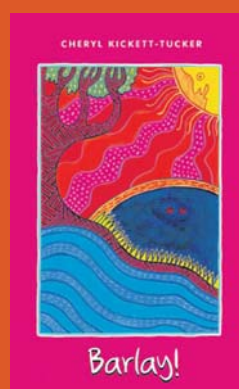
### Ngwaaily Nop (Groper fish boy)

The same authors who wrote Noorn tell a story of country and family based on the ancient language. A boy goes looking for his uncle and finds himself as well in this bilingual book. Wirlomin has also released Mamang, Noongar Mambara Bakitj, Dwoort Baal Kaat, and Yira Boornak Nyininy in a similar style.



### Barlay!

Perth academic and mother Cheryl Kickett-Tucker penned a bush tale about three kids who venture where they shouldn't. Barlay! is part of the Waarda series of indigenous children's books released by Fremantle Press.



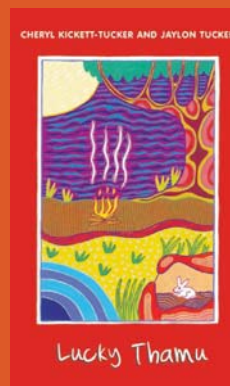
### Lucky Thamu

Cheryl Kickett-Tucker and Jaylon Tucker's short is about a boy who goes camping and prospecting with his grandfather and learns a lot about the country.

Thanks to UWA Press, ED! has 10 copies of Noorn and Ngwaaily Nop to give away. For your chance to win, email your school's, teacher's, class' name and school's address\*

to [ed@wanews.com.au](mailto:ed@wanews.com.au), with NOONGAR BOOKS in the subject line, by Friday.

\*See competition conditions on page 7.







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Page 7 of 11



**Teacher Narelle  
Ryder with  
students at  
Moorditj  
Noongar  
Community  
College, Middle  
Swan.** Picture:  
Megan Powell



## **SOURCES AND FURTHER LEARNING**

Thanks to the following organisations for sharing their knowledge about Noongar language.

- [noongarboodjar.com.au](http://noongarboodjar.com.au)
- Batchelor Press: Noongar Waangkiny, A learner's Guide to Noongar
- [noongarculture.org.au](http://noongarculture.org.au)
- [noongarculture.org.au/glossary/noongar-word-list/](http://noongarculture.org.au/glossary/noongar-word-list/)
- [wirlomin.com.au](http://wirlomin.com.au)
- Moorditj Noongar Community College
- [landgate.wa.gov.au](http://landgate.wa.gov.au)



# SOUNDS AND ALPHABET

Noongar is made up of vowels and consonants.

## Vowels

**Sound** *Sounds like in English*

<b>A</b>	as in about or media
<b>Aa</b>	like ar as in car or part or father
<b>E</b>	as in ten
<b>I</b>	as in hit or bit
<b>O</b>	as in law or court
<b>Oo</b>	as in book or sometimes boot

## Consonants

**Sound** *Sounds like in English*

<b>B</b>	between English b and p, like the p in spin
<b>D</b>	between English d and t, like the t in string
<b>Dj</b>	as in judge
<b>Dw</b>	similar to twitch
<b>K</b>	between English g and k, like the k in skill
<b>Kw</b>	like quiet
<b>-l</b>	as in lamp or nil
<b>-ly</b>	like million, never quickly
<b>M</b>	as in man
<b>N</b>	as in nil
<b>Ng</b>	like ng in sing, never like ng in finger
<b>Ny</b>	like onion, nuisance, never like many
<b>-p</b>	between English b and p, like the p in spin
<b>-r</b>	as in ran or carol
<b>-rd</b>	like saying d with tip of tongue turned back, card
<b>-rt</b>	like saying t with tip of tongue turned back, cart
<b>-rl</b>	like saying l with tip of tongue turned back, whirl
<b>-rn</b>	like saying n with tip of tongue turned back, torn

<b>-t</b>	between English d and t, like the t in sting
<b>-tj</b>	like the ch in chair but sometimes like the j in jam
<b>W</b>	as in wet
<b>Y</b>	as in yell

SOURCE: NOONGAR WAANGKINY: A LEARN'S GUIDE TO NOONGAR  
BY LOIS SPEHN-JACKSON







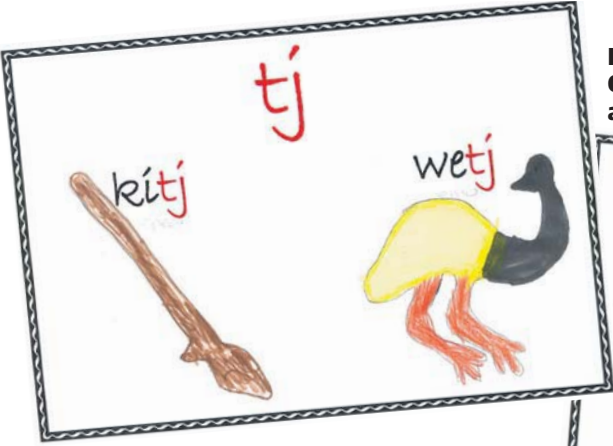
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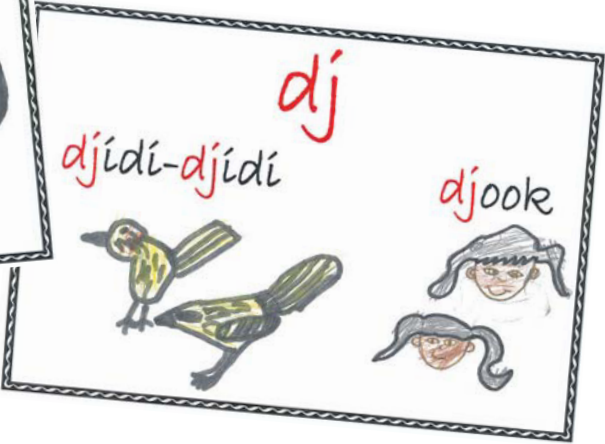


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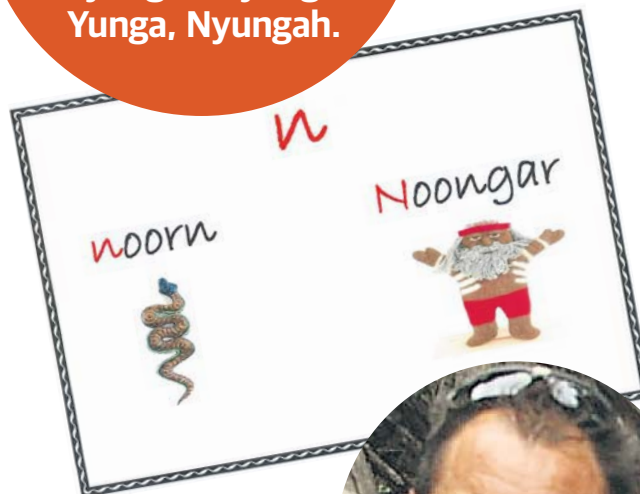
Pages from Moorditj Noongar  
Community College's Noongar  
alphabet book.





## DID YOU KNOW?

There are different spellings of Noongar: Nyoongar, Njonga, Nyungar, Nyunga, Yunga, Nyungah.



Kim Scott. Picture: Fremantle Press

## WISE WORDS FROM AUTHOR KIM SCOTT

Noongar novelist Kim Scott has a dream — that Noongar language becomes a key part of what it means to be West Australian.

"All of us living in south-western Australia speak a language strongly influenced by Noongar language – for example, place names (Yallingup) along with many names for plants (jarrah) and animals (quokka)," Kim said.

"I'd like it to be especially strong in the Noongar community – for its renaissance and health to be a major part of the narrative of our shared history and for the Noongar community to be empowered through sharing it," he said.

"Classical Noongar language is endangered and census data indicates only some hundreds of people speaking it in the home. But the same data also shows that Noongar language is regaining strength."





## FAST FACTS

- Almost 5000 WA students, from kindy to Year 12, studied 16 different Aboriginal languages in 38 public schools last year. Eight of the schools were in remote locations, 20 in country regions and 10 in the metropolitan area.
- Two high schools (Balga and Quairading) and 12 primary schools (Brookman, Cloverdale, Djidi Djidi, Medina, Southwell, Wilson Park, Yanchep, Avonvale, West Northam, Moorditj, Bentley and Roseworth) teach Noongar as a formal language course and many other schools are incorporating Noongar and other Aboriginal languages into their classes.
- Since 1998, the Department of Education has run a training course to enable people who speak Aboriginal languages to be Aboriginal language teachers in schools. A record 26 new trainees started in 2017, of which 11 are training to become Noongar language teachers.



**Watch Moorditj children speaking and singing Noongar in our video at [thewest.com.au/news/education/preserving-the-noongar-language-bc-5597307808001](http://thewest.com.au/news/education/preserving-the-noongar-language-bc-5597307808001).**

## WORLD'S FIRST NOONGAR DICTIONARY

About 20 years ago, Noongar language worker Rose Whitehurst compiled a 50-page **Noongar Dictionary** subtitled **Noongar to English and English to Noongar**.

It was the first time Noongar people had produced a dictionary and made it available to the whole population through schools, TAFE centres, local associations and homes. Here are some of the 2200 words and meanings featured in the dictionary.

- balyat = little person, cheeky and mischievous, with magical powers
- balyoongar = sand, soil
- bardang = run away, flee!
- djabooly-djabooly = swimming
- djen bwoka = shoe
- djerap-djerap = happy
- djildjit = fish
- djoo-djoo = shame shame
- kaa-kaa = kookaburra
- maam = father

