



# Wycliffe Today

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## *Diamond Anniversary: celebrating 60 years of Indigenous Bible translation with AuSIL*

**SPRING  
2021**

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- » Nobody else has a message like that
- » Always learning: the changing landscape of Indigenous translation
- » Spotlight on Timor-Leste

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## Editorial from the CEO



Wycliffe Australia is very proud of its members working in translation and Scripture engagement projects right here in Australia. In our own backyard, we have dozens of Australian Indigenous languages, many without adequate scriptures and many facing extinction. The opportunities for preserving Aboriginal languages and culture are huge and we are praying to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into these ripe fields.

In this edition we rejoice with our partner AuSIL (Australian Society for Indigenous Languages) as they celebrate 60 years of working with Indigenous communities to record languages and give God's Word to people in a way that speaks to their soul.

I was privileged to meet some of these committed people on a recent trip to Darwin and Alice Springs: Melody Kube and Kathy Dadd as they ran a translation workshop in Darwin, Lucy and Alan Rogers engaging Indigenous Christians through ethnoarts, David Blackman finishing the translation work in the Alyawarr language, and Ming Fang and David Strickland getting ready to dedicate the Anmatyerr Mini-Bible.

I am sure you will appreciate them all the more as you read their stories, always remembering that the Lord of the universe uses ordinary people just like you and me to do extraordinary things.

Max Sahl

## Wycliffe World Day of Prayer

Join us to pray for the Bible translation movement as work is done to bring God's Word to all people in the languages they understand best.



**Thursday, 11 November**  
**10 am - 12.30 pm**  
**Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia**  
**70 Graham Road, Kangaroo Ground VIC**

The event will also be accessible via a Zoom link when you register at [wycliffe.org.au/eventtype/prayer-meetings/](http://wycliffe.org.au/eventtype/prayer-meetings/)

To receive prayer points from Wycliffe Australia, email [prayerwords@wycliffe.org.au](mailto:prayerwords@wycliffe.org.au)



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## Transformed by the Word Diamonds in the rough

by Lyn Wake

*I rejoice in your word like one who  
discovers a great treasure.*

Psalm 119:162 (NLT)



When the excited young woman showed me her engagement ring, the earthy-brown rock, set in a delicate band of gold, was unexpected. But then she explained the significance this uncut, unpolished diamond held for her and her future husband. They had decided to reject the sparkle and instead represent the treasure hidden beneath the rough surface.

As we celebrate the diamond anniversary of AuSIL this year, it may be a good time to also consider the intrinsic value of gems that really do last forever. Much like raw diamonds, there are priceless jewels in God's Word, always there for us to uncover if we become 'spiritual miners'.

As spiritual miners, we need to be people of God who are never content to just stumble upon the odd surface-treasure, here and there. First, we need to know what true gems look like so we won't be fooled by counterfeits. Then we need to dig deep to uncover the incredible treasures available in God's Word.

The reality is, most treasures are so precious that they lie deeply hidden and protected in the recesses of suffering. Perhaps in this season you feel trapped in a dark place. If you do, please remember you are not alone. Keep crawling, searching and digging with all the strength God has given you. There are wonderful diamonds in the rough to discover in black crevices. Remember: there is light at the end of the tunnel and God's Word is the moment-by-moment lamp you need to illuminate your way.

God's truth-declaring Word is the ultimate diamond mine and treasure map. One day, we will surely delight in the dazzling heavenly treasures God has planned for us. But even these will pale in comparison to when at last we are face to face with Jesus—the greatest treasure of all.

Be transformed by the Word as you engage with:  
**Isaiah 45:1-13 & Psalm 119:121-168**

PHOTO: SABRINNA RINGQUIST



## AuSIL Events

*Join in the celebrations!*

The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL), in participation with Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia, invites you to hear stories of how Indigenous Australian communities are connecting with God's Word. You will also meet current AuSIL members and learn about their projects. Details may change, subject to COVID-19 restrictions.

### MELBOURNE

2-4pm Saturday 9 October  
(online event)

### ALICE SPRINGS

2-4pm Saturday 9 October  
The Bible Place, 3/38 Elder Street Ciccone

### DARWIN

2-4pm Saturday 13 November  
St Peter's Anglican, Cnr Trower & Sabine Rds Millner

**RSVP**

*RSVP is appreciated. Go to [ausil.org.au/events](http://ausil.org.au/events)*

## Check out the latest AuSIL video

[bit.ly/AuSIL](https://bit.ly/AuSIL)



# The future looks bright: capacity building for Indigenous leaders

PHOTO: GARY MCMASTER

by Deb Fox

*In February this year, Dr Philip Townsend was officially inducted as the new Director for Australia Timor Group at an event in Darwin.*



(No, he's not related to his namesake William Cameron Townsend, founder of SIL and Wycliffe!)

Philip takes over the role from Alan Rogers, who served faithfully as interim Director for two years. Philip and his wife, Lesli, worked in a Central Australian Aboriginal community and then as missionaries in Papua New Guinea.

Philip is passionate about training local people to be involved in the Bible translation process. He says that his experience working alongside local speakers showed him how vital their involvement is:

When I worked in the bilingual school at Pipalyatjara community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY Lands), a new degree was offered by the University of South Australia to enable Anangu speakers to become school teachers. Each day, I worked alongside Aboriginal Education Workers in the school and assisted them in their professional development. Similarly, while I was in Papua New Guinea, I was involved in helping local staff at the training institution to enhance their skills and ran workshops for staff from several related sites. These experiences convinced me that capacity development of local people must be a priority. That applies to the areas of language development, Bible translation and Scripture engagement.

Philip's doctoral research may offer a key to upskilling Indigenous leaders. In 2016, he finished his PhD which focused on the use of mobile devices by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers to enhance their professional learning in community-based Initial Teacher Education programs. He shares:

The use of mobile devices facilitated their ability, as adults, to be self-directed in their learning regarding place and time of study. Participants believed that use of mobile devices helped them finish work more quickly

and fit with elements of their own cultural philosophies. COVID-19 travel restrictions and lockdowns make access to Indigenous language communities difficult for non-residents. Assisting Indigenous colleagues to develop their computer and online skills may facilitate communication with AuSIL staff and enable ongoing language development, Bible translation and engagement with Scripture.

Philip is excited about UNESCO's upcoming Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). This presents potential opportunities for the Bible translation movement. Philip says he hopes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will have opportunities to visit and learn from other indigenous people from around the world who are managing their own activities in language development, Bible translation and Scripture engagement.



PHOTO: STEVEN MILES

**Please join us in praising God for:**

- *AuSIL's 60th celebration events in Sydney (online, 11 September), Melbourne and Alice Springs (both on 9 October) and Darwin (13 November)*
- *upcoming printing of two new translations: the Plain English Version and Murrinhpatha (a language in Wadeye, NT) with dedications likely in early 2022.*

**Pray for:**

- *recruitment of more people with a passion to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in language development, Bible translation and Scripture engagement*
- *UNESCO's Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) to bring new opportunities and partnerships with language communities.*

# Preserving culture through ethnoarts

*Lucy Rogers is an Ethnoarts Consultant for SIL Pacific Area, helping workers understand how local or 'ethnic' arts can empower local language communities to create visual art, music, dance and drama representations of Scripture in a culturally-relevant way.*

Lucy says that there is a growing interest in ethnoarts in both the secular and Christian worlds:



Among Indigenous Australians, there is a huge swing towards the use of arts. This has a huge effect on the maintenance of language and culture, allowing communities to pass on information in a way that is culturally relevant. We have found that when Indigenous Australians engage in local art forms within their communities, it speaks to others in their language group who might not otherwise have been interested in hearing about God.

Lucy explains how early government and missionary efforts among Aboriginal communities often discouraged their cultural practices:

This has had a detrimental effect on the way many Indigenous Christians perceive their culture. Just because a person becomes a Christian, it doesn't mean they have to give up eating with a knife and fork or setting the table a certain way. In the same way, not all Indigenous culture should be discarded.

Ethnoarts enable Indigenous communities to discover aspects of their culture they can bring to God and use for his glory. As Lucy explains:

We need to encourage Indigenous churches to engage in dialogue as they seek direction from God about what is permissible within their culture. Language groups such as the Warlpiri have adapted their iconographs to tell Bible stories. In Arnhem Land, there is a group of women exploring ways of using some of their dance forms for God. Yet other language groups have not done this and may frown upon it.

Unfortunately, local language usage has declined since Alan and Lucy first moved to the north of Australia. However, Lucy says that the production of audio Scripture and music in Garrwa and other Indigenous languages is helping to revive language, particularly in church settings:

We have been involved in many songwriting workshops since 1987. Some are held in our AuSIL centre, others in the community. It is lovely to encourage folk to seek God by writing songs, to base their songs on God's Word and to see people working together to worship God in their preferred musical style. It is a real joy and privilege to be involved in the whole process, from recording many of the completed songs, to later hearing these songs shared across communities.

**Please pray for Lucy and Alan as they:**

- *complete the video recording and editing of Genesis in 14 different languages for Nungalinga College*
- *help to create five Kriol rap songs*
- *support others in recording*
- *teach Nungalinga music students basic audio recording and editing skills.*

**MORE**

For more information, visit [wycliffe.org.au/member/alan-lucy/](http://wycliffe.org.au/member/alan-lucy/)

**MORE**

To support an ethnoarts project, go to [wycliffe.org.au/projects/anmatyerr-ethnoarts-scripture-engagement/](http://wycliffe.org.au/projects/anmatyerr-ethnoarts-scripture-engagement/)



PHOTO BY GARY MCMASTER

ARTWORK BY EMMA PRESLEY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME AT PENTECOST  
PHOTO PROVIDED BY MING FANG STRICKLAND

# ALWAYS LEARNING:

## *the changing landscape of Indigenous translation*

PHOTO: GARY MCMASTER

David Blackman has been working with Alyawarr speakers of Central Australia for almost 30 years. We caught up with David to find out what he has discovered during that time.



### **What does a typical Bible translation facilitator look like in an Indigenous community?**

I'm not sure there is one! For me, a Bible translation facilitator is someone who engages with people. You don't come as an expert.

You don't come to fix anything or teach anyone.

You come to learn. That's where it all begins. Any opportunity to learn from the local people, whether

it's hunting with them or watching them paint, watching them fix cars – anything like that to start relationships and discover more about culture and language.

### **What influenced your decision to move to Epenarra as a translation facilitator?**

When I worked for the Northern Territory Education Department in 1980-82, I recall noticing how little English was spoken in remote communities. It occurred to me how little people would understand English Scripture. Why would they?

**You had around 10 years experience living in Central Australia before joining Wycliffe Australia and being seconded to AuSIL in 1990. What changes have you observed amongst the people and languages over the past 40 years?**

Things were very different in 1980. In remote communities, there was no electricity, few schools, no phones, often no shops, housing was very basic.

When I first visited, there were many people living in humpies. Ten years later, when I returned to the Territory, there was better housing, sometimes electricity and usually a community pay phone. In recent years, mobile phone coverage has reached many remote communities. Increasing contact with the wider culture and more educational opportunities have opened up. Unfortunately, this contact has also brought about a decline in the use of local languages.

### **Have you noticed a change in the way young people perceive or identify with their language since more of the Bible and dictionary has been translated?**

Traditional languages are being used less by people under the age of 20, but many of them actually get excited about hearing the audio Bibles in their mother tongue. Young people mix their traditional languages with English, so they develop a unique, hybrid way of speaking. They like to read from the Plain English Version Bible, as the structure is similar to traditional Aboriginal languages.

### **What is the biggest challenge in your ministry and how has it grown your faith?**

I have learned that things hardly ever happen the way I expect! Inevitably, God has a better plan. There are so many variables in cross-cultural ministry that can affect what happens. We need to be flexible enough to cope with whatever comes. We are always learners!

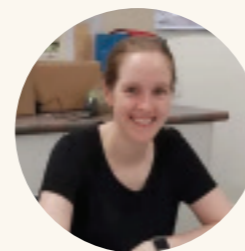
### **Please pray for:**

- wisdom in balancing different roles
- the ability to finish the task well
- young people to join the Alyawarr team.

# Nobody else has a message like that

PHOTO: GARY MCMASTER

Kathy Dadd is a Wycliffe Australia member working with AuSIL on a translation of the Bible called the Plain English Version (PEV).



It is a meaning-based English translation of the Bible that 'seeks to use language features that are common to most Australian Aboriginal languages' in order to communicate clearly to speakers of

Australian Indigenous languages who do not use Standard English.

The PEV Mini-Bible (about 70% of the New Testament and a few excerpts from the Old Testament) is due to be published soon but Kathy says that there is still a 'lifetime of work' to get other books translated and audio recordings made to help with Scripture engagement:

It's exciting to know that the PEV Mini-Bible has been sent to the publisher after many years of hard work that Dave Glasgow and others have put into it. It's also encouraging when we get requests for more books to be translated because we know that people are using it and finding it helpful. But it does remind me how much there is to go!

Working alongside local translators has also shown Kathy how hard it can be to clearly communicate the importance of the gospel message:

God's Word has the power to transform lives, so we really want to make sure that a Bible translation is communicating clearly, but that's not without its challenges. At a recent translation workshop, I found out that some languages don't have words for things like 'save', 'animal', 'box' or 'world'.

Even native English speakers have found the PEV helpful for understanding Bible passages in a new light. A particular passage which has stood out to Kathy from the PEV is John 6:68: *Your words will make us live with God forever. Nobody else has a message like that.* John 6:68b (PEV)

Indeed, no one else has a message like the one we read in God's Word. Translations like the PEV enable language communities to understand the unique message of God's love, grace and forgiveness.

### **Please pray for:**

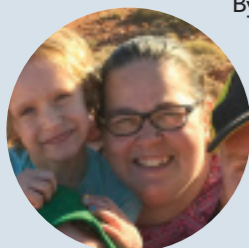
- more workers to help with the PEV
- more workers to support Indigenous translators.

MORE

For more information, go to [wycliffe.org.au/member/kathy](http://wycliffe.org.au/member/kathy)

## Called North

By Melody Kube - AuSIL Publicist



I grew up in Saskatchewan, Canada: a place where all four seasons get equal coverage.

Provided you define them as we did, if there's no snow on the ground, it's not winter. Even so, the word 'Siberia' held all the connotations for me that it probably does for you: a frozen wasteland, barely habitable. It's not true. Siberia is

more like those beautiful images you picture from an Alaskan cruise.

I met my husband in Siberia while we were both there with different mission agencies (Paul is from Melbourne). After we married, we went back again. We spent 12 years in total as cross-cultural mission workers in Siberia, living in three different cities and travelling across most of it on many different journeys. Part way through, we did linguistics training at SIL Australia in Kangaroo Ground and were able to put those skills into action, helping to support minority indigenous languages and contribute to oral Bible translation projects.

Coming back to Australia in 2017 was a hard decision and we floundered for a while, not knowing what would come next or how God would weave it together for our good and for his glory. Eventually, we accepted another call to the north, but this time on a continent where north means heat, not cold.

Adjusting to the heat and humidity continues to be difficult for me; some days I really struggle. Yet, I'm actually surprised by the similarities I find as much as the differences. Sometimes the work is similar, too: minority languages, remote locations, nomadism, spiritual perspectives. I believe God taught me things in Siberia that are relevant here.

I also know that I am learning things now that would apply in Siberia if or when God leads us back there.

The Northern Territory is an extraordinary place. When I share stories or photos of our life here with my friends back in Siberia, they are equally amazed at how exotic and different it is from their own experiences.

I don't know what God still has planned for my life. I hope there are more weird and wonderful locations he might have us live in and I know those will each have new things to learn and adjust to. Yet, I know God is faithful and as far as the weather is concerned—I think I've got it covered.

MORE

To support Melody, go to [wycliffe.org.au/member/melody](http://wycliffe.org.au/member/melody)

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are abridged  
versions.  
For the full  
articles, go to  
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/stories

# AuSIL history

*Wycliffe and its partners have long been committed to the work of Bible translation and supporting the needs of indigenous language communities throughout the world.*

This special edition of *Wycliffe Today* celebrates the 60th anniversary of The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL). AuSIL staff and local communities work together in language development, Bible translation, Scripture engagement, and the production of resources in print, audio and digital formats.

AuSIL was originally called The Australian Aborigines Branch of SIL and was formed on 19 June 1961. The organisation was initiated to specifically develop linguistic research and documentation, translation, training and language resources for Indigenous Australian languages.



By 1963, AuSIL's first office was opened in Brisbane and then moved to the Northern Territory in 1968. During the 1970s, linguistic work was carried out in 15 Indigenous Australian languages. In 2002, AuSIL's work expanded to include language communities in the Timor region. These days, that focus is on Timor-Leste. The SIL operating unit is now called the Australia Timor Group (ATG) and includes AuSIL.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON Timor-Leste

**Official title:** Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

**Also known as:** East Timor

**Fun tautology fact:** The names Timor-Leste and East Timor both literally mean 'east-east'. Situated in the easternmost region of the Malay archipelago, the Malay name 'timur' was adopted for the island, meaning 'east'. When the island was colonised by Portugal, the name was changed to 'timor' and added before the Portuguese word 'leste', also meaning 'east'.

**Official languages:** Tetun Prasa (Tetum) and Portuguese

**Working languages:** Indonesian and English

**Indigenous languages:** Bekais, Bunak, Galoli, Habun, Idalaka, Kawaimina, Kemak, Lovaia, Makalero, Makasae, Mambai, Tokodede and Wetarese

**Capital:** Dili

**Location:** Around 610 km northwest of Darwin

**Population:** 1.38 million people (est. July 2020)



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# Ministry Resourcing

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**Wycliffe**  
Bible Translators



## *What is Wycliffe Ministry Resourcing?*

Wycliffe Australia's Ministry Resourcing department seeks to support the work of our members and organisational partners on the field. We are committed to building strong relationships, with an emphasis on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and prayer. Our three main objectives are to:

- work closely with national Bible translation organisations under the Next Step Development initiative
- support strategic partnerships with SIL International
- support Australian members on the field with their project needs.

# Supporting communities in need

While the current edition of Wycliffe Today celebrates 60 years of Indigenous language work in Australia and the Torres Strait, the Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation (WRDF) is thrilled to be celebrating four years of providing support to disadvantaged communities. In this edition, you will read about how the Foundation is focused on resourcing the immediate needs of communities throughout the world that continue to be affected by growing COVID-19 numbers and consequent lack of work and food supplies.

## Next Step Development Projects

The mission of Next Step Development is to hear and understand what God has put on the hearts of our national colleagues, and through prayer to come alongside and support their vision and strategies for Bible translation. Next Step is currently working in close relationship with Wycliffe Global Alliance partners from PNG, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Philippines and two countries in South Asia.

To see more Next Step projects, go to [wycliffe.org.au/projects/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/)

## Wycliffe Relief and Development COVID-19 Update Project 8874 (WRDF)



What does an aid and development funding organisation do when many of its 'traditional' programs are on hold due to COVID outbreaks and lockdowns? COVID-19 has created staggering additional, urgent needs in marginalised communities around the world. For landless day labourers or cottage industry workers, lockdown means zero income. Death of family breadwinners means zero prospects.

WRDF has been helping wherever possible. At a time when many people are preoccupied with their own COVID case numbers and immunisation challenges, generous Aussie WRDF donors have so far enabled us to commit nearly \$150,000 to COVID relief projects in South and South-East Asia and Papua New Guinea. By the end of the year, we hope to send an additional \$50,000 or more to support the work of seven distribution agencies that are working across four countries.

This funding may seem like a small drop in the ocean of the total needs but every dollar helps provide hope and security for communities that are suffering. We are so grateful to God that you have enabled us to do this much. Each project is based on local needs but may include producing COVID prevention materials in local languages, training in hygiene and mask usage, provision of basic food staples or, where appropriate, the funds to buy them. The distribution agencies are all experienced and committed to seeking the greatest benefit from the resources with which they have been entrusted. On behalf of these partners and the communities they serve, we thank you.

**Target: A\$200,000**

## Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation Projects

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation is a separate company owned by Wycliffe Australia, which works through local partners to improve the practical aspects of life in marginalised communities. We aim to demonstrate Christian compassion and provide practical assistance in literacy and education, disaster relief, medical and basic health support. Donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

For WRDF projects, visit the WRDF website [wycliffefoundation.org.au](https://www.wycliffefoundation.org.au)

## Wycliffe Field Support Projects

Wycliffe Australia is committed to helping our field teams and the organisations they work with to thrive and serve effectively in their communities. Ministry Resourcing can help with providing funding for computers, village housing, travel costs, delivery of training, consultants and other services.

See more projects at [wycliffe.org.au/projects/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/)

## 'Thank you for showing us we are valuable': update on the Kanite Literacy Project, PNG Project 8893 (WRDF)



The impact of vernacular literacy schools in Kanite language communities in Papua New Guinea has been greater than we could have imagined. The Kanite Literacy Association (KLA) anticipated an average of 45 child students between the two elementary schools that were established. In the first year, they had an average of over 60 students fully committed to the program. This year, despite COVID concerns and government restrictions, the number of students was nearly at full capacity. In addition, the 16 adult students who have been attending classes are extremely motivated and many are leaders in their community. So often, we hear adult students express how thankful they are for being able to read and write for the first time in their lives, and stating that they now feel 'valuable'.

In 2021, community volunteers rallied to rebuild the kunai grass roofs and strengthen the school buildings. A new school building project in West Kanite was also begun. This year we have also installed commercial grade water filters and buckets for clean drinking water in the schools, which is now yielding positive results. Long before COVID hit, the community was learning about basic hand washing and sanitary procedures, which has made a big impact on keeping the community healthy, strong and safe.



**The President of KLA explained, rather emotionally, that he had previously thought that the Kanite people had been forgotten. To receive this kind of support has given the people hope and encouragement!**

While discussing goals and expectations, the KLA decided it was time to expand to all villages and remote areas of the Kanite language area. They decided that trained teachers would travel to remote villages and challenge the people to learn to read and write in their mother tongue.

### 2021 funds provided the following:

- interactive teacher presentation kits, including solar panel and projectors, mobile phones, Bluetooth speakers, power cables and carry cases
- new individual slate boards for each student (with dusters)
- exercise books, paper and pens
- stationery supplies including rulers, chalk, erasers, coloured textas, glue, scissors and tape.

The community also came together to help with maintenance and reconstruction of the school buildings. This year they decided to open a third school in West Kanite and began working together on this new project for the children.



## Anmatyerr Ethnoarts and Scripture Engagement Project 8338 (WFSP)



Ethnoarts projects encourage ethnic groups to use unique cultural art forms to connect with God's Word. In ethnoarts workshops, local Indigenous artists use their creativity in painting, music, drama or dance to connect with Scripture in a culturally meaningful and relevant way.

When artists sit down together painting, they talk about Bible stories and it draws them to God. Their paintings may be used to tell Bible stories to different generations so that children, young people, and older people may all understand God's Word, even if they cannot read it.

Funds raised for this project will be used to cover the cost of painting materials, transportation and food for events and workshops where local artists create paintings of Scripture in forms they know best.

**Target: A\$2,000**

## Alyawarr Translation and Scripture Recording Project 8334 (WFSP)



About 1800 people speak Alyawarr (pronounced 'al YAH wa ra') in a region about the size of Victoria, to the north and northeast of Alice Springs. Written literacy in this language is low. Many can read some English but often with little comprehension. David Blackman has been working with the Alyawarr since 1991.

David and the team see audio and video recordings as crucial in helping more people connect with the gospel. The team has recorded:

- the Gospel of Luke
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- James
- the script for the Easter video (from Luke 19-24).

Other ongoing projects are:

- the video script for Luke 1-18
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- 1 & 2 Peter (recently translated).

**Target: A\$5,000**

