REVIVAL: The Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity’s director Margaret Florey with Wati-Wati and Wemba Wemba language activist Jason Kirby, Dr Luise Hercus was able to reconstruct Wati language were sketchy, with its region, she said records of the Wati- guages the last time she was in the area, Ms Florey said.

Mr Kennedy was able to write two new traditional songs in the Mutti-Mutti language.

Workshop breathes new life into native languages

MATTEO GAGLIARDI

A LOCAL Indigenous language was brought back to life for the first time in generations, as the only chroni- cles of the area’s native languages visited Swan Hill last weekend. Members of the local Wati-Wati, Mutti-Mutti communities met with Doctor Luise Hercus, the woman be- hind the only known records of the area’s native languages, at a work- shop organised by the Resource Net- work for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD) on Saturday and Sunday. RNLD director Margaret Florey said it was the first time Dr Hercus returned to the area since studying and recording the local languages in the 1960s and 1970s, providing local Indigenous people with their first opportunity to hear their ancestors speak on tape and learn how to speak their languages.

“The community was very keen to get together with Luise, who is 89,” Ms Florey said.

While Dr Hercus had been able to make records of most of the lan- guages the last time she was in the region, she said records of the Wati- Wati language were sketchy, with its last known speakers having already been gone for 70 or 80 years. However, based on other sources and using a proven scientific analy- sis comparing the area’s languages, Dr Hercus was able to reconstruct some of the Wati-Wati language and taught Wati-Wati members how to continue with the reconstruction process.

“One of the main things that came out of the weekend was that Jason Kirby, who’s a younger Wati-Wati man, created a new story in Wadi-Wadi,” Ms Florey said.

“They’re recorded it and it will be the basis for some language-learn- ing work for himself and probably for his children.

“I think it’s quite justified in saying it’s the first new Wati-Wati story for at least 35 years.”

Revinvale language teacher and language activist Brendan Kennedy, himself a member of the Wati-Wati and Mutti-Mutti communities, said these types of workshops were “vital to the revival of our languages”.

“It gives the kids of the Wati-Wati and Mutti-Mutti the opportunity to meet Dr Luise Hercus, who lives in Canberra and so it’s not often that she gets the opportunity to come down to the Murray River,” he said.

“She’s been working on our lan- guages [for] well over 50 years, so obviously her understanding of our language is fairly comprehensive, and she’s an enormous help to us to understand how language was used.”

Mr Kennedy was able to write two new traditional songs in the Mutti- Mutti language.

Not so dull Federal Budget unveiled in Canberra

IN WHAT was promised to be a “dull and routine” event in comparison to last year, the Abbott Government unveiled its second Federal Budget last night.

The 2015-16 budget was an- nounced by Treasurer Joe Hockey in Canberra.

Little information on taxes and the expected surplus were revealed in the lead-up to the budget, with accountancy firm Deloitte Access Economics predicting an underlying cash deficit of $4.9 billion for the 2014-15 year.

Yesterday morning, Mr Hock- ey said deficit was likely to be less than $41 billion.

Families and small business were expected to be big win- ners, with ‘efficiency measures’ — or cuts — earmarked for the Department of Health, Depart- ment of Education and Training and Attorney-General’s depart- ment.

Every lower house federal MP in the country was tipped to be allocated $150,000 for investment in local infrastructure projects.

However, the lead up to the budget hasn’t been without controversy, with the govern- ment copping plenty of flak over plans to cut parental leave payments to $5000 new moth- ers in the budget.

Last year’s budget saw ordi- nary Australian’s shoulder the burden of the “heavy lifting” amid a fiscal outlook formed on the basis of improving the budget bottom line.

It was estimated surplus would be reached by 2024-25. For more comprehensive cov- erage of the budget see Friday’s Guardian.