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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Endangered local languages come to life through linguist's work with community

Members of Swan Hill-area Indigenous language groups will this week hear their languages along with fieldwork stories from Dr Luise Hercus, one of Australia's leading chroniclers of endangered Aboriginal languages, for the first time during an open community gathering.

Members of the Wadi-Wadi, Madhi-Madhi, Dadi-Dadi, Ladji-Ladji and Wemba-Wemba family groups and community members will meet with Dr Hercus in Swan Hill on 9-10 May for a two-day workshop organised by the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (**RNLD**).

During this workshop, Dr Hercus will be playing recorded fragments of the family groups' heritage languages. Many younger members of those groups will be hearing their languages and Dr Hercus' stories about meeting their ancestors for the first time.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Dr Hercus created the only record of this group of languages as well as other highly endangered Aboriginal languages of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. In 1995, Dr Hercus was recognised for this vital contribution when she became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her service to education and linguistics, particularly through the preservation of Aboriginal languages and culture.

RNLD Director Margaret Florey said the workshop will be a significant event for the members of the Wadi-Wadi, Madhi-Madhi, Dadi-Dadi, Ladji-Ladji and Wemba-Wemba family groups and community members.

"This workshop is bringing local language activists who are striving to bring their languages back to life once again together with Dr Hercus. Her experiences provide a window to the past for these language groups, with her knowledge of the way the languages were once spoken, and how to interpret and use the recordings that she was able to make with their ancestors several decades ago," Dr Florey said.

The goal is to help the local groups maintain and teach their languages to future generations, she said.

Language teacher and language activist Brendan Kennedy, from Robinvale Victoria said Dr Hercus' visit was significant for Swan Hill Indigenous groups.

"This is a point in our language journey where we are starting to make progress and really grow in terms of our language knowledge," Mr Kennedy said.

"It is significant that Luise is coming down to our country so we get to see the fruits of her work, and we are lucky that she is passionate and has taken a special interest in our languages. Her recent book, *The Madhi Group of Languages*, along with Stephen Morey, Barry Blake and Ted Ryan, is a real asset for our language revival efforts."

Editor's note: RNLD supports the long-term maintenance of Australian Aboriginal languages. This workshop is funded by the Australian Government's Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) grant scheme (administered by the Ministry for the Arts, Attorney-General's Department).



**Advancing the sustainability of
Indigenous languages &
increasing the participation of
Indigenous peoples in all aspects of
language documentation & revitalization**

For further interviews, see www.rnld.org/mediaevents
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Photos available on request