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Stats and Stories – how to be an advocate for EAL

I'm going to range widely across different settings; I'm not going to talk in any great detail about any particular one because what I'm going to do is try to answer what I think is the principle theme of the conference, which is the idea of becoming more active and successful in public advocacy for language policy for pluralism. Even though the starting point might be the interests of EAL learners presumably in the learning of English or public support and understanding of their efforts in learning English and maintaining other languages I think it's wider than that and I believe that the best and most successful policies and indeed the necessary ones these days are ones that are inclusive and joined up (which I always find a very amusing British term!) and all those kinds of things. I'm going to draw mainly from the American experience, where I've done a lot of my own work, the Australian experience, which is principally where I am from, and some parts of south east Asia, where I do most of my work today.

I'm going to talk very generally about language policy and even really about one aspect of language policy that I think is very important in the context of advocacy which is about how policy gets made. I'm going to want you to think about policy as a conversation and think of your own role, NALDIC's role, as being enfranchised to participate in a conversation around the shaping of policy for the distribution of public resources and I want to compare a difference of style between the United States and Britain and Australia, which I think is generalising a bit too much but I want to make a single point about the British/Australian way to do things and the American way and the different kinds of results that come from these.

I'm going to talk about Australia, the US and a few comments about the UK (they'll probably be all wrong so I hope you'll be generous and kind and not criticise me too much about being out of date).

I'm going to talk about what I think is happening in the so called 'English speaking' world. That is '*one literacy in English only*' and I mean *one literacy* very deliberately because I think at the same time as we have got this reductionist tendency of stressing English only we also have a reductionist tendency towards the literate practices of young people and I think they go hand in hand with each other.

I'm going to talk about *PISA* - not the leaning tower but another kind of (this is the *Programme for International Student Assessment*) - which I think is a way in which it might be possible for advocates to enter the public conversation because the data from *PISA* start to support a case that we would want to make for more just language rights-based policies and I think we have to use prestigious data whenever it's there (and ignore it when it's not working our way!). Then I will specifically talk about *PISA* and immigrant learners and I'm going to conclude by what I think makes policies, that is, using my formula here, **stats** and **stories** fundamentally and I'll try and explain that in a way that I hope makes sense. And then finally I'm going to say what I think we should do to make up lost ground.

National policy styles:

I think that we make policies in very different ways. I thought Meirion's paper was wonderful this morning about the ways in which that kind of effective, technically very sophisticated, language planning practice that we see happening in Wales is, I think, an example of what we'd call text based language planning. I think there is another way to make language policy planning and I think that the Welsh had to go through this process too and still need to go through it, which is basically discourse based (in other words through persuasion). I think that it's very important to understand that people have interests around language. Language is a political practice and the deployment of resources around language is a political practice. People have interests and there are distinctive national policy styles. I find Australian politicians continually trying to talk the talk of American language. I did my PhD on American language policy and it seems

to me that absolutely nothing of their experience is transferable to us. I wish some if it were and much of it shouldn't be, but it's the case that there are policy styles particular to socio, legal and political traditions in different countries. I think that it's very important to remember that.

I think in the case of the United States it's possible to talk about something called adversarial legalism. Even in education there is active litigation and legislation around explicit rights of people. There are famous language based cases, like *Lau vs. Nichols* in 1974 in which 14000 Cantonese speaking children prosecuted a school district on the basis of the fact the children were being denied their language rights by being taught in a language they didn't know, or the *Anaba* case on African American English in 1979, and these are cases which are inconceivable in the Australian and British legal systems. I think it's really important to remember that frameworks in which the policy is made aren't transferable. The kinds of ways in which we generate traction or interest or activity around language policy in our societies tends to be more, in the best sense of the word, rhetorical or persuasive.

The US has had much more ambitious language education planning and policy than many people realise, it's actually quite immense, but a great deal of it involves the intervention into schooling of judges and magistrates and lawyers and prosecutors and the demonstrating of things that are made to be understood by people outside of the educational context and I think that that has really serious and unfortunate consequences for the role of teachers and I think that as far as possible we shouldn't go down that path.

So that's the first point that I wanted to make, that there are very different national policy styles and that we have to advocate around styles that are particular to the context we live in. During the 1970s and 80s both of these styles (the American style and the British/Australian style) opened space for policies which acknowledged minority language education entitlements. I think we in Australia did very well in that decade, I think that's been well acknowledged around the world, and we had not a single piece of legislation that accompanied any of the changes that produced massive progress in relation to bilingual rights, both for aboriginal children (who speak today something like 65

indigenous languages) and immigrant children, and a large part of that success has been eroded today. In the US a very different tradition of litigation around language rights (recognising language rights) under the Bill of Rights and through litigated entitlements actually produced really impressive progress, all of which is being rolled back and has been rolled back to a significant degree since the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 which abolished the *Bilingual Education Act*.

During the 1990s under both policy regimes this policy space has been closed and I think that that is because something else is going on. Language education policy is being made internationally through comparative international statistics generation. That's why I'm going to talk about *PISA*. I think it's really important that we understand that, to a significant degree, language policy work is extra-national today. I think that to some extent in Britain you've known that, because some of the earliest work around rights for language minorities came from European migrant conventions of the 1970s. It's very clear that European conventions and charters make a significant difference here because you are incorporated into this pooled sovereignty activity that goes on with the EU, and we don't have that in our case of course. Neither of these policy styles is inherently conducive to minority language entitlements and they both generate different types of policy rhetoric. I think it's really the case that when you look very carefully into the American situation that a great deal of the way in which knowledge around language rights is constructed is actually not transferable outside of the North American context. I don't think that it applies particularly well even in Canada. And yet it's because of its enormous power that it is often actually naturalised as though that is the way in which language education practice should be everywhere.

These policy styles are converging under international statistical comparisons and all of these are driven by a market rationality. There's a lot to regret here, but we have to be pragmatic and accept that this is going to set the pattern for the ways in which immigrant children in this country as much as in Australia and indeed other societies, will be discussed and understood.

The strongest argument I have for thinking about international statistical comparison as driving language policy is a conversation I had six years ago in Sri Lanka with the Minister for Education. This was at a time in which language based conflict, as is occurring again today, had produced a major civil war and a lot of killing and there was an upsurge in fighting just at that very time and in a discussion with senior officials in education (the Minister for Education in particular) it was very clear that the single most important thing that was governing language education (or indeed any kind of education) practice under World Bank and International Monetary Fund influence were OECD comparisons of literacy rates across states. And you could have closed your eyes and imagined that you were hearing the Secretary of Education in Scotland or Germany or Taiwan. This internationalisation of how we think about education is really very heavily advanced and I think it's very incumbent on all of us to deal with the consequences of it because it means that even though we have national policy styles they're being driven to a significant degree by comparability located within a theory of education that's all about the market place.

So these produce different rhetorics. If we examine the past progress and liberalisation it's clear that antagonistic language education interests not only can but must collaborate. Mostly they collide: I find that language education interests in the UK don't talk to each other very much at all. I find that, in Australia, when we produced our best public policies, they were when we talked across our differences where the people concerned with aboriginal interests, deaf studies, immigrant interests, foreign language interests and English teaching interests worked together and produced a kind of shared vision of a comprehensive language policy. Mostly they collide and when our government realised how powerful we were in a unified way it was very clear that those forces within the government didn't want us to have a single voice and started to try and buy off some sectors (and ultimately with some success) to divide us because fundamentally our interests are not all identical and we have to concede space if we're going to progress the activity of a general language policy.

A science based language policy approach

One of the ways in which it seems to me that we can work together is by having a science based

rhetoric of language policy approach and I think that we can do this from a lot of the research that we have available to us and from the *PISA* studies which are now very supportive of some of the claims we want to make on the system.

Science based language policy approach (in other words the effectiveness of certain kinds of programmes and the outcomes from certain kinds of programmes) means we document practice. This is my fundamental lesson, the way to influence policy is to evaluate practice and this produces a better quality of relations among advocates than pursuing our rights based or rights centred frameworks. I believe in language rights, very clearly I feel very strongly. I'm devoted to that and it's been all my professional life, but I have to conclude that advocating language rights really produces closed doors in most education systems and most strongly in English speaking societies. There's actually a complex reason why that is the case. I think it's not just to do with the power of English in the world but to do with a particular history of liberalism around language which is not shared in many societies. It's certainly the case if you pursue language rights or language rights centred discussions arguing the rights of people to language maintenance, the rights of communities to prevail inter-generationally, in some societies that works very well, internally, to organisations it's a very solidifying way to talk but outside of that organisation it often produces closed doors. I think a science centred language policy discourse is better in that case.

Australia, the US and the UK

In Australia we produced two *B* words in the 1990s and both of these *B* words were very damaging of the rights and entitlements of English learners in our system. They were '*benchmarking*' and '*broadbanding*'. Now neither of these is particularly new or interesting as a word but in the specific context in which they arose they reflect a politics of denying cultural differences, a politics of literacy-centred administration which was used to remove EAL children's language rights. Benchmarking fundamentally means that the principal basis on which educational decisions would be made in our society were the relative standing of Australian learners on international comparative tests. Were our kids smarter than the Finns or the Thais or the Germans? It's very clear that literacy came to occupy the definitional centre

ground and literacy came to be the super-ordinate term, the term which defined all of the language learning activity of young people in our schools. And broadbanding was the result of this benchmarking activity. So benchmarking meant international comparisons which sometimes made us not look good and the discourse that that generated was a way to remediate this disadvantage had to be found and it was decided that broadbanding (that is linking programmes that were previously discreet) brought them all together to allow schools greater autonomy to do what they would wish to do (or individual headmasters or Principals to do what they would wish to do) and the net result of that was the most powerful groups in the community, of course the ones who are most discursively organised, most powerful in school committees, most powerful on parent teacher bodies etc. prevailed. Minority groups' voices were lost and after five years you find many fewer teachers designated as ESL or EAL or bilingual programme activities. So broadbanding basically is a process of removing the distinctiveness of particular specialisms like EAL and as soon as people start to argue 'Aren't these things fundamentally the same?' you know that this kind of discussion has got underway and a bigger agenda is motivating what's going on.

In the UK I think a very similar kind process can be observed. It started with the introduction of the National Curriculum by the Conservatives. Isn't it interesting that they should be the people to do that? Clearly it's an anti-conservative practice to standardise and centralise educational practice when mostly ideologically they would advocate local-based decision making. If you look at the basis of the introduction of the National Curriculum in the UK it was a perception of the toleration by teachers of non-standard forms of English. I think it's very clear that the papers that most influenced the decision making of the ministers of education of 1988, 1989 and 1990 were papers like *English, Our English* which argued that there was far too much toleration, too much linguistic variationism, too much toleration of non-standard kinds of English and that the consequence of this was a lowering of overall standards. The consequence can be seen very much in the way New Labour has fundamentally continued the same way to understand literacy as a practice of 'fixing up' children's spoken language with the probable withdrawal of ring-fenced funding for ethnic

minority achievement. I think we're seeing an almost identical process of backgrounding background, whereas a large part of 1970s and 1980s education was to say that context and background culture and family background, histories of migration, make a difference to how children learn language and issues of identity are important in the process of becoming a new person in a new setting, a new kind of citizen. A large part of *benchmarking*, *broadbanding* and *the literacy hour* and these kinds of things is to background background. To say that background makes no difference or little difference. To say that learning is fundamentally an individual's achievement and not something that can be tracked or explained socially or sociologically in any strong way.

It's very clear in the US that this practice was basically generated out of discussions in the Republican Party and their great achievement was the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 and one of its clauses was to abolish the *Bilingual Education Act* of 1968. The *Bilingual Education Act* of 1968 was the transfer to language of the principles of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, in other words believing that for language defined minorities discrimination could be tackled in the same way that race discrimination was being tackled in the *Civil Rights Act* and it's no accident that the NCLBA actually rank kinds of research according to their validity. Quantitative, empirical, statistically demonstrated, correlations or causations of findings are what count. Ethnographic accounts and descriptive accounts or teacher researcher accounts are given much less prominence. So certain kinds of knowledge are validated over other kinds of knowledge not just because of the way that knowledge is produced but mostly because of its consequences pedagogically: one favours and foregrounds background; the other backgrounds background. What they are interested in fundamentally are psychological explanations of learning, not social or sociological or economic explanations of learning. The BLEA was very much a practice of saying that children's backgrounds - learning backgrounds, their culture and their linguistic functioning systems were all essential in the acquisition of English, even though the great majority of programmes generated under the system were short term transitional programmes, and the NCLBA basically says that that doesn't work and what has to happen is structured submersion.

All of this means that literacy has come to be an essential part of a discourse of public accountability in education. It is also part of the practice of de-professionalisation of teachers; the whole trajectory of education in all of these countries - the Australian situation is very clear, but it started here in the United Kingdom in the late nineteen-eighties - has been a sense of the de-professionalisation of teachers – that the people best able to make judgements about the specific requirements for learning of particular groups of children are not teachers fundamentally in the end but systems of research that are produced by trained scientists of research. And all of this is based fundamentally on labour market interactions with education, that is human capital theories of education.

The original ground that this was based on was that education systems have always regarded multilingualism (and by extension language minorities) with suspicion, or as merely a problem to be eradicated. It's no accident that the creation, the very invention of the idea of linguistic minorities coincides exactly with the creation of the national state. The national state, especially in Europe, was based on the idea that states are defined around singular languages. That's clearly not the case in many parts of the world. It's certainly not the case in India; it's certainly not the case in Vietnam; it's certainly not the case, classically, in many parts of colonised Africa. One of the things that you learn when you look at the derivation of the idea of the national language is that it actually produced the idea of the national state, and the national state is a European construction, and it was exported via globalization today and migration as well but obviously colonisation to all parts of the world. So the idea today around the world is that national states are defined around having different distinctive national languages, and that necessarily produces everyone else who doesn't have that language, constitutes them, as being a linguistic minority. The orientation fundamentally is that multi-lingualism is a problem. And when you start thinking about things as being a problem, you think about how to remove the problem.

Preparing the ground to change this, at least in our societies, I think the single most important act was the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 in the United States. It's an extensive rights-based litigation to acknowledge language as a source of social

litigation and to grant it recognition. This was fundamentally the *Bilingual Education Act* that came out of this in 1968 and was abolished in 2001. In the 36 years of life of that act, even though it was largely unsuccessful in producing bilingualism, what it did was to fundamentally undermine the national story around a unifying singular language, as being the definition of belonging to the state. During the 70s and 90s we gained ground further, and there were perceptible changes in the tenor, content and style of the language policies in many countries. If you read the policies during the 70s and 90s, it's very clear that they start to talk about young children who speak other languages in exactly the way that the *Swann Report* was starting to do. This was happening exactly at the same time in lots of societies. I've got in my files at home statements from the regional government of Tuscany, which is not noted as a leader in the language minority rights issues, and many people don't even know it has a government. But they were doing exactly the same thing; they were starting to talk about the Chinese speakers of Prato as actually constituting a resource that the region might exploit for connections with China. It's very clear that in this period of time something undermining the traditional uni-lingualism was underway. And it was oriented as a positive construction of pluralism based around the idea that globalisation was producing something that was inevitable, something that was actually going to produce a resource of cultural, intellectual and economic value.

We can see this in New Zealand. In this particular period of time Maori was declared the official language of NZ. It's the only language that's official in NZ. In many countries which develop language acts during this period of time it's in fact the minority language that's the official language of these countries because English, or the dominant language, was not seen to be requiring any kind of protection. So for many countries which have official language statements it's often a minority language that's regarded as the official language. (This is the case in Ireland as well.) So this gaining ground was overturning a really ancient and very deeply rooted practice of thinking of states as uni-lingual. It started to change in the 1990's when globalisation started to be perceived differently. The first sign of this was the development of international comparative performance data. The first one of these was *International Literacy Year* in

1990. Until then the international literacy agenda had been run by UNESCO and it was basically a human rights idea, the idea that it was important for countries around the world to collaborate and make adults in Pakistan and Kenya literate. What happened from 1990 was that the OECD became interested in literacy and that changed it radically from a human rights perspective to a human capital notion. The idea combining with neo-liberal theories as to how states should be governed, small or night watchman type of states, new kinds of nationalism which wanted to protect western practices. Market fundamentalism which believed that states can't justify things because there are too many competing values, therefore what has to happen is that things should be placed into the market place and the cost is what ultimately determines the distribution of resources.

All this is a human capital economic theory which places pluralism under very great pressure. And this started to happen fundamentally in the US and spread from there.

The result in language education has been restrictive and increasingly hostile responses to multi-linguism and this has come in two forms. In the US it's come in the form of the *English Only* movement which although it has a long history has been extraordinarily active during the 1990s. Fifty four states now in the US have *English Only* or *Official English* legislation. There are hundreds of counties that do, lots of cities that do, and out of California a movement called *English for the Children* has managed to roll back bilingual education mandates in quite a few states. California was the first but also Arizona, it was defeated in Colorado recently but Massachusetts, which is normally a liberal state and would be expected not to pass this legislation actually passed it very successfully so bilingual education is actually either officially illegal in many parts of the US or under enormous pressure and needing to seek waivers from parents to be able to be mounted. A large part of the rationale for this is the whole discourse of what is efficient to do in states and efficiency is fundamentally a market rationality and in English societies English is associated with efficiency and the whole history of the construction of English all the way back into English philosophy deals with the role of states in relation to language being inimical and unpleasant and unacceptable and that the state should get out of this stuff and leave it to the market

place so this is very much of a piece with the broad philosophy of the state.

So fundamentally we're now also losing proportion. During the last five years there has been a perceptible deterioration of public trust and confidence in 'difference'. This can be seen in the number of books produced that are suspicious of difference and pluralism and multi-culturalism, for example against the teaching of Cherokee in American schools as though the fundamental purpose of the teaching of Cherokee is to bring down the cohesion of the society in general. The number of such books has absolutely sky rocketed so the production of literature and new ideas that are hostile to pluralism is absolutely enormous whereas a completely opposite trend had been the case during the 1970s and 1980s.

So effectively what we have seen is that the whole idea of difference has been privatised. It's been pushed back to the family and to the home. So from economic to social to public security anxieties, all of these have now been transferred to cultural policy undermining the pluralist visions of languages, of *Englishes* and of *literacies*. This is a very clear trend in all English speaking societies in particular, but now very clear also in France and to some extent in Germany. The production of this is hostility to communication diversity and it has moved language policy towards a more controlling, centralised regime based fundamentally on generating statistics-based normalisation of children's performance. What this means is that children are compared to each other through a statistical normalisation process so that background is backgrounded. Children's cultural and linguistic differences are less and less relevant: what's more and more relevant are their psychological similarities as learners.

Fundamentally what we've got is a move towards an English only, one literacy practice. I haven't talked about the literacy part very much but I'll say very quickly that it's to do with the way in which literacy policies in all these countries increasingly are defined around spelling, paragraph cohesion, the minutiae of the production of written texts. Whereas if you look at the texts that have been trying to influence literacy policy in the previous five years it's very clear that they had been expanding the notion of what literacy was to non-alphabetic literacies for a start then to computer literacies and

then to social literacies and a whole range of other kinds of literacies. So at the same time as we have a contraction back into one normalised, standard, single, alphabetic, western European, notion of literacy, we have an English only practice going on in the US and in Australia the English only politics works under the banner of one literacy (but fundamentally it's the same thing). I think *PISA* offers us some hope here and what it does is, completely incidentally, start to generate information that I think allows us back into the conversation, to put background back into the foreground, to say that learners are not the same and it's very important that their differences be brought back into the conversation of public policy and that in fact this is socially cohesive and not undermining.

PISA

In 1996 OECD extended its education indicators research to include, for the first time, direct measurement of student learning. Now many societies, many countries, opposed this. They were very actively hostile to the idea that you would have this bunch of people sitting in Paris who would actually send out (or commission people who would come out) and start looking at learning outcomes of students in schools in Brighton or Manchester or places like that. *PISA* is the most read public policy document in education in the world. Ministers of education everywhere read it. Countries that aren't part of *PISA* or the OECD are joining it. Argentina will be part of the next one, Chile and most of the Latin American countries have decided to come in, many countries in South East Asia are joining so pretty soon you're going to have international statistical comparisons of learning that will be universal.

It is standardised assessment of course (we all know all the problems with standardised assessment) but nevertheless people believe standardised assessment tells the truth whereas other kinds of ways of studying don't give you comparative and truthful answers to things. It's focused around fifteen year olds and 41 countries were involved. There were 43 but, interestingly, France and another country I can't recall withdrew when they saw the first lot of evidence from the first study that showed they were not doing as well as they wanted. They rejoined once they decided to correct the problems that they thought had produced the very bad result for their learners in 2000. So you can see the incredible

power that this has. The best performing country by far is Finland (always has been Finland) and interestingly is the way in which it enrolls its learners latest, children don't start schooling until they're seven. It's administered to really quite large cohorts of learners in each country and its primary aim is to assess how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired what they call the kind of skills for societal participation. But it's highly narrow. It assesses only reading, mathematical and scientific literacy (interestingly these are all called literacies), curriculum mastery and adult life skills knowledge. In 2003 they added problem solving. This is how they define these skills. Reading literacy is defined that way, it's not an unacceptable definition of reading but it is actually certainly nothing like what multi-literacy advocates would have produced and it's hardly looking bilingual. Scientific literacy is less controversial I suppose but the one that's attended to most, the one that is actually most controversial, has been mathematical literacy, and the one around which most Asian countries compete to do best in, in particular Taiwan and Japan. Problem solving looks at the application of cognitive processes to solving word problems. The UK has been involved in all of them. What's most interesting is what this says about immigrant learners. In the first test they were ignored and in the second one they produce a theme report which has just got published and is called *'Where Immigrant Students Succeed'*. What's very important about this is that it gives us a way in because these are reports that ministers of education, ministries of education, have to invest large sums of money in to participate. And they invest a considerable degree of potential embarrassment as well because they are compared with many other countries. There are conferences held in every country immediately the *PISA* results are produced to analyse ways in which better performance can be generated next time. This reports the performance of immigrant students compared to what they call native counterparts, information on a country's approaches to integration, and it examines some background influences. Not a particularly large number but nevertheless more than many states are themselves doing today.

The first and second generation migrants reported in the 2006 report, that is those not speaking the language of the *PISA* tests, are identified and their performances are reported separately. The first

conclusion that they make out of this is that countries that have specific EAL practices have migrant students doing relatively well in comparison with their counterparts in other countries. The conclusions are very important, high levels of immigration do not necessarily impair integration. Remember this is official documents that your minister will have. Official documentation of the performance of immigrant learners that actually relates them to the other 57 countries that are involved in this process. The results indicate that immigrant students are motivated learners and have positive attitudes to school. They call this a *disposition* and they say that it can't be developed further by schools to produce better results than what schools and education systems have already obtained. Despite these strong learning dispositions immigrant students often perform significantly behind their native peers. This is particularly strong on mathematics and scientific literacy. In the majority of countries at least 25 percent of immigrant students face considerable challenges in personal and professional lives because of their low mathematics scores. This is a really damaging finding which I think should be played up already with our education minister and as I'll explain later it opens up the basis of a conversation around how to deal with the embarrassing conclusion that it has even though we were found to do reasonably well. Maths differences are not only due to language problems but in many cases this is the case and it is the case for the UK that the mathematics underperformance of immigrant learners in this country was assumed to be fundamentally because of inadequate EAL support for learners in the earliest years of schooling.

Immigrant language education is similar across countries but in terms of curricular and focus it varies. Curricular means fundamentally whether all teachers are supported to develop the English language education, the academic literacy and English language of children or whatever the national language happens to be, and the focus is the withdrawal or cross-curriculum basis. And very importantly, countries where there are either relatively small performance differences between immigrant and native students or where the performance gaps for second generation students are reduced compared to first generation students are the ones which have the well established language support programmes with relatively clearly defined goals and standards. Put simply,

what this really means is societies that actually have immigrant language support activities produce the best results. Societies that allow their immigrant students to sink or swim usually produce children who sink.

That's fundamentally what *PISA* concludes, that's the report that I think could possibly open up the conversation around language support improvements for immigrant learners in several countries. I think if we look at what language policy conversations produce we can see that there is a combination between statistical knowledge which allows you to be taken seriously by governments, and stories which allows elected representatives who aren't experts in education to understand what we're talking about.

Stats and stories

All policy I think comes down to a combination of stats and stories. If you don't have the stats people don't believe that you have done serious work that actually documents the case that you're advancing and if you don't have the stories then politicians don't actually understand what you're talking about because mostly they are not educators and we talk a particular kind of language that's not understood by them. I've worked for five education ministers and I can tell you that stories, that is judiciously placed stories that account for why literacy programmes are important, why immigrant language retention is important, why first language or aboriginal language programmes are not going to undermine the nation, stories that are grounded in the personal experiences of people that that they can identify with, when these are added to statistical demonstrations of why investment in these things is worthwhile, this is a basis for public policy advance. And fundamentally it's a conversation.

I'm going to try and explain that by relating to some experience I had when working with Joanna McPake and some other colleagues at Scottish CILT some years ago. I'm going to compare three reports that tried to influence public policy. One of these was very successful, one of them was very partially successful and one of them was a complete failure. The first report was called *Citizens of the Multi-Lingual World* by someone called Mulgrew. Mr Mulgrew was an official in the Education Ministry and this was a report on improving modern foreign language teaching and also community language teaching in Scotland. The second was a UK wide

study on literacies, Sir Claus Moser I think was this gentleman's name, and it's called *Improving Numeracy and Literacy, A Fresh Start* and it's about, obviously, literacy and not modern foreign languages and the third is the McPherson report on revitalising Scottish Gaelic. And all of this was produced at the time when I was in Scotland or just before. The Mulgrew report used this kind of rhetoric that European mobilities, social inclusions, citizenship, democracy and the age of information were fundamentally important to the reason for having a proper national language policy around modern foreign languages in Scotland. In other words this is a story, a claim, for public resources around generic *feel-good* activities like this. And the result of this was that it got absolutely nowhere, it was a buried report, and it produced no public funding whatsoever. The McPherson report used this kind of rhetoric and discourse. It said that Scottish Gaelic is 'the foundation stone in building the new Scotland, an integral dynamic component of a self-assured community, social stability and pride in linguistic cultural identity'. All sentiments that I share. They also said that it's 'a precious jewel in the heart and soul of Scotland', That it's 'not constrained within strict boundaries or herded into tight corners'. It's 'national, European and international', 'fundamental to Scotland', it's 'not on the periphery, the fringes', it 'must be normalised', its 'rights must be secured'. Now you can see why I have selected these statements, this is a rhetoric or a discourse about rights, about all the kinds of things that I was saying are associated with the seventies and it got a little way. In fact I toned this down a little earlier because originally I said it got nowhere. In fact there has been some progress in Scottish Gaelic recently. But look at the Moser report (it isn't really statistical but it's a little bit statistical) it's first things are 'One in five...', this is what counts, this is the stats part of the policy making, 'One in five (this is UK learners or adults) are not functioning literally, far more have problems with numeracy, it's a shocking situation, reasons for the relatively low productivity in our economy.' The lesson here is very clear, there is a certain rhetorical practice in making public policy that attracts the attention of policy makers and there's a rhetorical practice that doesn't. And that practice, I think, has got to be seriously understood by advocacy organisations. We are all involved in pushing things that we seriously believe in but our beliefs are not necessarily shared, we know this of course, by people who govern us) and whereas the

rights based discourse is important, as I was saying earlier, in solidifying our internal cohesion, our belief in ourselves and what we want to achieve, it's actually not necessarily as effective outside of this context.

Sputnik 1 and Sputnik 2

A more powerful example perhaps is from the USA, if you'll allow me to go through this quickly. If you look at language policy practice widely in the US from the mid 1950's what we find is that in foreign language teaching there were two great moments of massive attention, that could both, I think, be called *Sputnik*. Sputnik 1 in 1957 when the Russians or USSR put up the first man in space etc and we've all read about it, we know that it happened before we were born and 9/11. Both of these moments are associated with immense public investment in languages in the US. You can track on a chart the investments in the learning of strategic foreign languages appropriated by the Congress and you will see that immediately after these moments of great national vulnerability in the US, there was heavy investment in learning about others, in learning about cultural differences and diversity, in learning about other societies and in studying languages. In 1957 it was Russian and Chinese, now it's Arabic and Pashto and Dari. Foreign language teaching to a significant degree in the US is tied very closely to the national security agenda. I think it probably would be in many more countries if we knew information as well as we do in the US. So I call 9/11 *Sputnik 2* in relation to foreign language teaching because, much more so than in Australia, it's possible to get money, especially in universities. If you can say you're going to take a whole lot of speakers of this language from level X to level X plus 4, you're going to get a significant amount of money from the federal education department or the CIA or somebody because that's in the national interest.

What does that tell you about public policy and languages? It tells you something very important. In the EAL and heritage languages, we see a very similar kind of trajectory. The *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, the *Bilingual Education Act* of 1968, litigation around rights, the *Lau vs Nichols Case* in San Francisco in 1974, the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001, what you see fundamentally is the opening up from the rights basis shortly after this for languages and the closing down at exactly the same time, or a very similar time, as the agenda for

foreign languages starts up. Can you see what's going on here? Foreign languages, literally foreign languages, taught in programmes in which the learners are not background speakers of those languages principally are funded massively. Heritage languages (I don't particularly like the term 'heritage' but it's used a lot in the United States, I prefer the term 'community languages' because 'heritage', sounds like something that's no longer alive, like a kind of gargoyle on a building) are actually unfunded and have been privatised so in fact these are now given over to the family. If you look at the progress of African American English and the recognition of non-standard kinds of English they are very closely connected to research, the research done by Labov and people like this who show the systematicity of non-standard forms of English and why it was discriminatory to not recognise these in public education, they were litigated in 1978 in Ann Arbor based on the kinds of principles of the *Civil Rights Act* and the *Bill of Rights* and *Brown versus the Board of Education*, precedents in American language litigation. But in 1996, when African American English increasingly now called Ebonics, Eboniphonics, or Black Phonics, was actually completely incapable of generating any public discussion any more, in fact in the Congress described as 'rubbish talk', 'gutter talk', 'rash language', because all the legislative strength that came from this period of time, the sixties, has completely disappeared, although possibly that will come back. So you can see what's going on is this massive skewing of the language policy effort towards national security interests and the foreign-ness of it rather than any domestic thing. At the same time, in native languages or Native American languages, you have probably the most generous-spirited pre-ambles of any language act that I've ever read apart from the Constitution of South Africa, which is very good on languages, is the Native American Languages Act of 1990, the most un-funded but verbally brilliant piece of language legislation you could find. So the conclusion you could reach here is that when languages are weak and dying, someone's going to pass some legislation supporting your continued existence but give you no money for it. When languages are strong and dangerous, they're going to put lots of money in to making sure that we can get some control over the information that is handled in those languages. This is a kind of instructive lesson in the power of language policy

around rhetorics of national unity and not national unity.

So stats and stories, alliances and action. I think, out of this, for advocacy purposes, we need to think about the following lessons. Influencing policy means being admitted to the policy-forming conversations. Sometimes that's interpreted as sounding like what the minister wants you to sound like. I don't mean that at all, but what I mean is being admitted to the policy-forming conversations. Most people aren't admitted to the policy forming conversations. The policy-forming conversations in language education are being driven by the OECD and the reports that they are doing around the performance standards of countries compared to one another. To be discursively enfranchised, that is to be invited into the conversation, we need to be seen to have something to say and the best way to have something to say is to evaluate practice, to evaluate what is going on in the terms that are dominant in the conversations in the society at the time. That produces the stats and the stories that allow you to participate in public advocacy to bring about the change. But to make it really happen, you have to form alliances with people who have related but different interests from your own, also in the language field. And then you have to take a lot of action and what we know from the 1970s, 80, and 90s is that language policy involves lots of temporary wins. Sometimes they are lost quite quickly and the basis on which the wins were gained is dissipated and you have to struggle again. But that's why I see language policy as not a piece of legislation or a text or a report but a conversation, a discourse, and I think that all of us who are interested in pluralism, minority language rights and things like this, we have been closed out of public discussions in many of our societies in the last 5 or 6 years, certainly in the last 10 years there has been an insistence on social cohesion in which difference has been constituted as a threatening problem. If we're going to reverse that, we have to get into the policy conversation and I think that the way to do that is to start looking at educational academic achievements which increasingly work our way. That doesn't mean that we loosen or lessen any of the commitments that we might have to pluralism on the basis of rights, but I think it's very important right now to be pragmatic because I feel that the accelerating tendency against difference is so great that we risk losing everything that we've gained. I fear that because I used to say that Australia had the

most progressive language policies in the world and we did for six years. We lost them entirely because the conversation moved away from the basis on which we had originally established it.

So if I'm leaving you with anything, it's that I think in English-speaking countries we've had a lesson in how to conduct policy in the last 5, 6, 7 years. This lesson tells us that, to be admitted to the conversation, we need to have stats. We have to attach to it stories which work in political contexts, explanations for politicians. I'll give you a very simple example. There was an adult literacy programme in Brisbane, in Queensland, that was seriously threatened because it was catering for aboriginal women who had been incarcerated and were being released and the success rates of this programme were regarded by everyone in the education department as being hopelessly slow and inadequate and the minister was going to close it down. And it was an absolutely chance explanation that a colleague of mine gave to her in an airport once about why not only were these rates of progress of learning of English literacy by aboriginal women who didn't speak English at all, not only were they not slow, they were extraordinarily good, by giving her an explanation around a single individual's life story that helped that minister to interpret a reality that she had only ever experienced statistically. She wouldn't have listened to the story if there hadn't been a quantitative study of how much educational learning they were getting for their financial investment. But she had no capacity to interpret the information until it was given to her in a way that actually worked. But to be admitted to the opportunity to have that conversation means having the statistical information at hand. It's an incredibly demanding thing and yet it is fundamental to progress in language rights today.

