

Undoolya Road to Antulye Street: Arrernte street signs in Alice Springs

Margaret Carew

This is an unpublished paper. Please acknowledge the writer.

1. The Arrernte people and their language within the multilingual setting of Alice Springs

You'd see lots of English back in those days and I'd think why can't we see the language of our country. It's good nowadays because you can see Arrernte in lots of places, on signs, on shirts, on buildings. We can feel proud about that.

Anonymous interview with Arrernte literacy worker (Kral 2000:141)

Prior to European contact in Central Australia, Arrernte speaking people enjoyed exclusive ownership of the landscape and its resources surrounding the Macdonnell ranges - the region now occupied by the town of Alice Springs. The story of colonisation is complex, as are the social dynamics around language contact in the region. There is a long history of scholarship and commentary related to the settlement period, the history of mission activity (eg. Henson 1994; Albrecht 2002), anthropological studies of Indigenous people in this contact setting (eg. Spencer & Gillen 1927; Austin-Broos 2009), the Arrernte language (eg. Breen 2001; Henderson 1998; Wilkins 1989), the history of Arrernte literacy (Kral 1994) and the struggle for landrights, control over education and access to services (eg. Coughlin 1991; Foster et al 2005). There are also several excellent accounts of Arrernte life that draw from lived experiences and close friendships and working relationships between Arrernte people and people of other backgrounds (eg. Rubuntja, Green & Rowse 2002; Moss 2010).

The key points that are relevant to this paper are summarised here:

- As for the rest of Australia, English is the dominant language, used in government business, the mainstream media and education (Clyne and Kipp 2006)

- Alice Springs is a multilingual setting¹, and Arrernte is one among a number of Indigenous languages spoken in the town. Indigenous people are in general multilingual – most people speak more than one traditional language and a variety of Aboriginal English (Harkins 1994). Many also speak a more standard variety of English.
- The Eastern and Central Arrernte language dialects are spoken by approximately 1500-2000 people and there are approximately 2000 speakers of Western Arrernte (Kral 2000:73). The languages are still being learned by children, especially those families who live outside the urban setting at Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa), Ntaria (Hermannsberg) and a number of smaller outstations in the region.
- Arrernte and English first came into contact in the settlement period from the 1860s, only 150 years ago. Most relevant for the current paper is the great difference between the phonologies of Arrernte and English (Wilkins 1989, Henderson 1998). The phonology of Arrernte² is also quite different from other Central Australian languages such as Warlpiri and Pitjantjatjara, and the Eastern and Central Arrernte standard orthography reflects this (Breen 2001, Turpin 2004).
- Arrernte people are recognised both in Native Title law and through customary practice as the traditional owners and native title holders of the Alice Springs region. Native title to land owned by descendants of the Mparntwe, Irlpme and Antulye clan groups was awarded in 2000 (Hayes vs Northern Territory 2000). There are ongoing claims for land involving Arrernte people, which involve the assertion and negotiations of connections to kin and country in the contemporary context (Morgan & Wilmot (2010).
- Despite this recognition, most Arrernte people are economically and socially marginalised in terms of access to governance, services, employment, housing and education (eg. Foster et al 2005).

2. The concept of linguistic landscape

² And other members of the Arandic language group (Alyawarr, Anmatyerr, Akarre and Kaytetye)

Landry and Bourhis (1997:25, also cited in Backhaus 2007:9) define linguistic landscape as follows:

The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration.

They also identify two basic functions of linguistic landscapes, summarised as:

1. **The informational function**, where the language used on signs (i) marks the geographical territory of a language group or (ii) indicates that communication in the domain marked by the sign will be conducted in the language of the sign
2. **The symbolic function**, where the presence of a language on a sign has affective significance. In settings where language is central to group identity, public signs in the in-group language can symbolise that the group holds power in official and cultural domains. Exclusion of a group's language from signs symbolises a devaluing of the language and can be a factor in shift away from use of this language over time (Landry & Bourhis 1997:25-29).

Backhaus develops the construct of linguistic landscape further through a discussion of the semiotic properties of the public signs that comprise a linguistic landscape. Backhaus invokes the Peircian triadic definition of the semiotic sign: as comprising an interaction between a signifier, a signified and an interpreting entity (Backhaus 2007:5). Relational interactions between the components of semiotic signs give rise to three different types of meanings:

- **Indexical** – the sign 'points to' something in the real world; there is a direct indication of a relationship between the signified and the signifier (such as an arrow sign, pointing to a place, or natural signs, such as smoke, indicating the presence of fire)

- **Iconic** – the form of the signifier is a parallel to something in the real world; a standard representation of the signified (such as pictograms)
- **Symbolic** – the relationship between sign and signifier is conventional, but arbitrary (such as the relationship between phonemes and the sounds of speech, alphabetic characters and speech).

To reconcile the informational and symbolic functions of public signs with their semiotic functions, I follow Backhaus who uses the term ‘semiotic mode’ in relation to the inscribed content on public signs. Apart from the intrinsic indexical character of public signs³, one can also describe the semiotic mode of sign content as indexical, iconic or symbolic. As both the inscribed content and spatial and social context of public signs is often complex, we would expect some layering of semiotic modes, and variations in how these are interpreted.

Landry and Bourhis’s informational functions of specific languages on public signs thus represent more than one kind of semiotic mode:

Indexical points to the existence of the language and its speakers

Iconic is a representation of the language and its speakers within the community and territory;
 is an assertion of the value, rights and cultural authority of the language and its speakers

We can extend this and suggest that the semiotic symbolic mode as described by Backhaus refers to the interpretation of the inscribed content of public signs - that is, the message contained within the text. Public signs inscribed with text from a minority language may contain symbolic content in the main message of a text (ie. the characters making up text correspond to words and phrases in that language). However, this will be

³ Backhaus emphasises the ever-present context dependency of the meanings of public signs. He argues that in the material world all public signs are indexes, as they must be located *in situ* in order to be what they are. It is part of their intrinsic character as public signs to refer to the context of the message presented upon them (Backhaus 2007: 6-7)

unreadable by people who don't speak that language. We could assume that those who do speak the language would be able to read it, and be able to interpret the symbolic semiotic content; however in the Alice Springs context, we can't assume that minority language speakers have functional literacy. This begs the question of the purpose of bilingual signs with symbolic content that can't be read by most people, whether they speak the language or not.

As a way of approaching this question we must look beyond what is actually encoded in text, to consider other types of meanings, and how these are presented and interpreted in context. Landry and Bourhis's notion of symbolic function within linguistic landscapes is separate to the symbolic semiotic mode, in that it represents the affective status of the public sign's language content. This invokes contextual interpretations of the significance of language on public signs and then what other meanings the interpreting entity applies to the content of these signs. As described above, such meanings relate more to the value placed upon languages and their political and social status within a multilingual setting.

3. Public Arrernte text in Alice Springs

The history of Arrernte text is short (Kral 2000). Prior to the contact era, Arrernte was - and remains - primarily an oral language supplemented by a rich set of ancillary semiotic systems - elaborate performance arts repertoires, iconography used to inscribe objects with religious meanings (Spencer and Gillen 1927), sign language and narrative arts such as the practice of *tyepetye*, the telling of 'sand stories' in which a storyteller uses verbal language and drawings in the sand (Green 2009). Orally based multi-modal communication practices are the means of cultural transmission for Arrernte people, and this holds true in the contemporary context (Kral 2000).

Kral's survey of the availability of Arrernte text (including Arrernte on signs in Alice Springs) and interviews with literate Arrernte people led her to conclude that 'functional everyday engagement with text is not an aspect of the social context of Arrernte literacy' (Kral 2000:77). However, Arrernte people interviewed by Kral placed a high value on Arrernte text, despite the limited range of its use within the Arrernte community. Books,

pamphlets and signs produced in Arrernte have an ‘important emblematic or symbolic value’ and demonstrate the importance of Arrernte literacy as a ‘symbol of cultural identity and language maintenance’ (Kral 2000: 103). This conclusion is an instantiation of Landry and Bourhis’s symbolic function of linguistic landscape (1997:27-9), and reflects the importance of the visibility of text from one’s language in terms of its prestige within the broader community.

3.1 The language of street signs in Alice Springs

Alice Springs has a rich history as a pioneer outback town, and the practice of street naming is one way that the town celebrates this. Josie Petrick’s research into street and place names (Petrick 2005) provides detailed background to the naming of streets, and from this it is evident that pastoral and mining pioneers, the Overland Telegraph Line, notable figures in the development of the town and local characters are the main themes. Plants are another key theme: plant names were used exclusively for the New Eastside subdivision in 1974, and extensively in subdivisions in Connellan and Sadadeen in 1981-82.

Street names were coded according to 4 main thematic categories, and were further divided from there into subcategories. They were also coded according to what language was the source of the name – for this paper, this information has been simplified to enable a focus on where local Indigenous language words have been the source. Table 1 (a-d) provides a summary of street names in Alice Springs, showing a tally of thematic groupings and source language. Table 1(b) presents a key to the 4 main thematic groups and the subclassifications within these.

After collating the available data, I discussed the Arrernte street names with Veronica Dobson, an Arrernte elder and language consultant. I also accessed some Department of Lands archival records through the NT Archives, and discussed naming practices with Mr Vern O’Brien, who was a surveyor who worked for the Department of Lands in Alice Springs from the late 1950s through to the 1970s. Table 2 presents the chronology of street naming themes in different localities, and Table 3 presents information about the 26

Arrente and 1 Warlpiri street names in the town. A discussion of the sources, spelling and naming practices relating to these street names follows.

Table 1: Thematic clusterings of Alice Springs street names, showing English⁴ and Arrente origins

A: Streets named after people	Arrente	English
Pastoral/mining pioneer (settler period)		75
Other local identity (shopkeepers, hoteliers, transport etc – generally post settler period – includes Chinese, Afghan and Italian identities)		57
Explorer		30
Aboriginal identity	1	
Government/public official (including bureaucrats, politicians, railway officials, teachers, medical, police, land surveyors)		52
Missionary		18
Associated with the Overland Telegraph Line (early settler period)		31
Aeronautical identity		3
Other		1
Total	1	268

B Streetnames with a Heritage theme	Arrente	Warlpiri	English
Name references pioneer/settler/communications/transport history			19
Name references war/pioneer memorial site			2
Name references Indigenous history, cultural artefact or group	1	1	1
Total	1	1	22

C Streetnames with a Nature theme	Arrente	English
Animal	7	
Plant	8	48
Landscape, natural feature	4	16
Named for a place or site	6	1
Total	25	65

D Streetnames with other themes	Arrente	English
Golf related		8
Aeronautical		5

⁴ Table 1 shows the number of streets named after Chinese, Italian and Afghan identities in the post-settler period, and number of missionaries prominent in the Alice Springs district were German Lutherans. For current purposes these names have been counted as English here.

Directional (eg. North, south etc)		2
Other (including unknown)	1	3
Total	1	18

All streetnames within Alice Springs Town boundary	Arernte	Warlpiri	English
Total	29	1	373

Table 1 shows that of all 403 streets, 269 are named after people, who are largely drawn from the subcategories of pastoral/mining pioneers (75), people associated with the Overland Telegraph line (31), government officials (52), local settler identities (57) and missionaries (18). Within the category of local identities here are a smattering of streets named for Afghan cameleers (3), Italian mining pioneers (5) and Chinese settler families (3), which indicate the multilingual ethnic mix of the settler period⁵. One street is named after an Aboriginal person – Rubina Street – named after the woman who was married to the Arernte artist Albert Namatjira⁶.

Most streets in the heritage category refer to pioneer and settler heritage, mostly through the practice of naming streets after Central Australian pastoral leases and homesteads in the Larapinta subdivision. Names that reference Indigenous history or artefacts are: Karnte Road⁷ (from *karnte* ‘circular head pad’) and Walmulla Street, which derives from the Warlpiri word *warrmarla* ‘war party’. Another possible inclusion in this category is Yarabah Street. Yarabah is not an Arernte word, and the provenance for this is uncertain. However it is the name of a mission in Northern Queensland (spelt Yarrabah), and there may be a link here.

Thematic categories, the suburbs where they predominate and the time of registration are summarised in Table 2.

⁵ Afghan heritage is honoured through Sadadeen Road, Mahomed Street and Khalik Street. Streets named after Italian individuals and families are: Basso Road, Ragonesi Road, Baldissera Drive, Mercorella Circuit, Ciccone Court. Chinese street names are: Cheong Street, Hong Street and Sing Road.

⁶ This study considered only streets within the town boundaries. There is, however, a road in the West Macdonnell ranges named after Albert Namatjira (Namatjira Drive).

⁷ There is also a sacred site related to this artefact, and Karnte Town Camp nearby is named after this site. Karnte Road leads to this camp.

Table 2: Thematic clusters of street names in Alice Springs suburban and rural subdivisions, by registration year⁸

Year	Suburb	No of streets	Naming themes
1952	Old Eastside	17	Person or family name
1957	The Gap	12	Person or family name
1957	Braitling	11	Person or family name
1961	The Gap	4	Arrernte totemic animals (see table 3)
1962	The Gap	3	Person or family name
1962	Gillen	14	Person or family name
1969	Gillen	15	Person or family name
1971	Gillen	17	Person or family name
1972	Braitling	9	Person or family name
1974	Braitling	4	Arrernte nature theme (see table 3)
1974	New Eastside	17	Plants
1978	Braitling	7	Person or family name
1978	Braitling	6	Arrernte nature theme (see table 3)
1978	Araluen	5	Aeronautical theme
1981	Connellan	9	Plants (7), eponymous (2)
1981	Sadadeen	13	Plants
1982	Sadadeen	4	Plants (3), Person or family name (1)
1984	Sadadeen	8	Person or family name
1984	Desert Springs	8	Golf related, Person or family name
1985	Larapinta	25	Person or family name, pioneer heritage
1985	Braitling	5	Landscape
1986	Desert Springs	4	Golf related, landscape
1988	Iparpa	8	Person or family name
1994	Araluen	4	Person or family name
1994	Desert Springs	5	Person or family name
2000	Alice Springs (CBD)	7	Person or family name
2004	Ross	3	Person or family name
2005	Larapinta (Stirling Heights)	3	Arrernte clan estates
2006	Stuart	3	Plants
2009	Larapinta	3	Person or family name

From Tables 1 and 2 it is evident that the practice of naming streets after people prominent in the town's pioneer-settler history has been a continuous theme since the first registration of streets in 1952 through to recent years. Table 2 also shows that naming streets after Arrernte words has happened several times since 1961,

⁸ Not all Alice Springs street names are counted in this table, only those in specific localities that were registered together by the NT place names committee.

predominantly in Braitling (1974,1978) and The Gap area (1961), and most recently in 2005 in Stirling Heights with the *Lhere Artepe* Stirling Heights subdivision.

The 25 year period between 1979 and 2004 saw no streets named with Arrernte words. For the subdivisions of Sadadeen and Connellan in the 1981-2 period naming practices departed from the town norm by drawing from names of plants, and in 1985, new streets in Braitling followed a landscape theme (eg Valley Court). Also in 1985 the thematic preference for new street names started to swing back to pioneer heritage, and the large subdivision of Larapinta in followed this wholeheartedly, even extending into the names of early pastoral leases and companies (eg. Woolla Court, Gibeanie Court, Bokhara Street). The 1980s and 1990s was an era of growth for Alice Springs, as evidenced by the numerous new streets that were registered in this period. Despite the early example of Arrernte street names in new suburbs in 1961, 1974 and 1978 (plus several others), the opportunity to draw from the Arrernte language to name streets was not taken up in the town during this growth phase.

I now turn to take a more detailed look at Arrernte street names. Table 3 provides a list of Arrernte street names in Alice Springs, their source and meanings in English.

Table 3: List of street names in Alice Springs derived from Arrernte and Warlpiri words
Compiled from these sources: Petrick (2005); Northern Territory Government (2011); Henderson and Dobson (1994); Brookes (1991); Local Directories (2010/2011), Dobson 2011 pers com).

Text id	Location	Standard Spelling	English equivalent	Date
Undoolya Road	Main road heading east	<i>antulye</i>	shadow, solid shade	17/9/52
Achilpa Street	The Gap	<i>atyelpe</i>	native cat	22/2/61
Arunga Street	The Gap	<i>arenge</i> <i>arengke</i>	euro dog, dingo	22/2/61
Echunpa Street	The Gap	<i>atyunpe</i>	perentie	22/2/61
Gnoilya Street	The Gap	<i>akngwelye</i>	dog	22/2/61
Larapinta Drive	Main road heading west	<i>lhere apintye</i>	salty spring	12/12/62
Walmulla	The Gap	<i>warrmarla</i>	group of men, a war	27/10/6

Street		(Warlpiri)	party	5
Aldidja Street	Braitling	<i>artetye</i>	mulga	12/9/74
Angguna Avenue	Braitling	<i>angkwene</i>	Major Mitchell's cockatoo	12/9/74
Erumba Street	Braitling	<i>lhwempe</i>	ghost gum	12/9/74
Timbira Street	Braitling	<i>tunpere</i>	a type of grass used to make a grass hook ⁹	12/9/74
Amara Court	Braitling	<i>amare</i>	mistletoe	14/7/78
Durida Court	Braitling	<i>nturrerte</i>	spinifex pidgeon	14/7/78
Erija Street	Braitling	<i>irretye</i>	wedge tailed eagle	14/7/78
Lulba Court	Braitling	<i>lhelpe</i>	blue mallee	14/7/78
Mulara Street	Braitling	<i>mpwelarre</i>	rainbow	14/7/78
Tunga Court	Braitling	<i>athenge</i>	ironwood tree	14/7/78
Iparpa Road	Main road to White Gums; goes past Iparpa town camp	<i>irrparylpe</i>	Arrernte Dictionary – site name	23/12/81
Lilibi Street	Braitling	<i>ilperle</i>	paperbark species	27/8/82
Engoordina Drive	Larapinta	<i>Ingkutne</i>	place name	4/12/85
Ulpaya Road	Stuart	<i>ulpaye</i>	creek	6/2/91
Karnte Road	Arumbera	<i>karnte</i>	circular pad for carrying things on the head	12/6/91
Oonchiunpa Road	Eastside	<i>untzeyampe</i>	corkwood nectar	26/8/92
Tmara Mara Circuit	Araluen	<i>apmer mwerre</i>	good place	4/2/83
Antulye Court	Larapinta	<i>antulye</i>	shade	12/12/05
Mparntwe Drive	Larapinta	<i>mparntwe</i>	Arrernte clan estate	12/12/05
Irlpme Court	Larapinta	<i>irlpme</i>	Arrernte clan estate; narrow valley	12/12/05
Anthelk-Ewlpaye Access	Stuart	<i>Anthelke Ulpaye</i>	Charles Creek, and Town Camp nearby	

⁹ The *tunpere* ‘grass hook’ is used to get witchetty grubs out of tree roots.

3.11 Undoolya Road to Antulye Street: spanning over a century of street naming

Undoolya Road leads to the Undoolya Station pastoral lease, which was taken up by the Hayes family as a cattle run on country to the east of Alice Springs in 1905 (Petrick 2005:91). This area of country is known to the Arrernte as *Antulye*, meaning shadow, or solid shade, a reference to the hills which cast thick shadows on the land (V. Dobson 2011, pers comm 19 May). Undoolya Road was registered in 1961, and reflects the customary spelling for the station and road dating back to 1872 (Purvis 1952)¹⁰. Antulye Court was registered as part of the Stirling Heights subdivision in 2005, and is derived from the same Arrernte word – see below for further discussion of the Stirling Heights names.

Several other streets in Alice Springs have employed customary or ad hoc spellings for Arrernte words, and these names have arisen for a variety of reasons. One example is Oonchiunpa Road, (< *untyeampe* ‘corkwood nectar’). According to linguist Gavan Breen this was how the town camp residents of this road spelt it when it was officially gazetted in 1992, after many years as a rough access track (G. Breen 2011, pers comm 15 May). Larapinta Drive is a main road that leads west to Hermannsburg mission. It derives from *lhene* ‘river’ *apirnte* ‘salty’), the Arrernte name for the Finke River, where the mission stands. This road was established in the early days of the mission and the name is a reference to its destination from town.

For Ilparpa Road Petrick is unclear on the source for this name suggesting that it derives from *irrpalle* a food source (Petrick 2005:98). Neither is the NT place names register (online) which lists three possible sources for this name as:

- (i) Arrernte word for Mt Blatherskite;
- (ii) incorrect translation [sic – transcription] by Olive Pink of Illaba, as mentioned by Spencer and Gillen for a claypan SW of Alice Springs

¹⁰ Although Purvis mentions that in 1952 it was also known as Arltunga Road ‘since the Ruby Rush of 1885’.

(iii) Incorrect translation [sic – transcription] of ‘Irpalpa’ the Arrernte name for the area between Mt Blatherskite and Temple Bar Gap, including the swamp and range.

The Arrernte Dictionary is clearer – it lists the name for Mount Blatherskite, which the nearby Ilparpa town camp is named after, as Irrparlpe¹¹. The word *irrparylpe* is also the name of an edible plant (*Portulaca sp.*), but any semantic connection between the plant and the site name is not obvious (Henderson & Dobson 1994).

In a few cases, Arrernte words have come to be awarded to streets indirectly, via another naming convention. An example of this is Engoordina Drive, in the Larapinta subdivision. Engoordina derives from Ingkutne, a place name near Horseshoe Bend on the Finke River, where there is a pioneering pastoral lease, homestead and railway siding. Consistent with the naming pattern when the Larapinta subdivision was gazetted, the street is in fact named after the homestead, and references pioneering heritage, rather than the original Arrernte site name. In a similar fashion Tmara Mara Circuit (< *apmere mwerre* ‘good place’) was named in honour of the home and gallery of the artist Rex Battarbee (Petrick 2005:191).

Apart from such customary and indirect naming, there have been four separate occasions when new streets in subdivisions have been gazetted in Alice Springs with names derived from Arrernte words. These are discussed in 3.12 and 3.13.

3.12 Arrernte street names in The Gap and Braitling

There is a cluster of four adjacent streets in The Gap area that were registered in 1961: Achilpa Street, Echunpa Street, Gnoilya Street and Arunga Street. These names reference key totemic associations for Arrernte people: the *atyelpe* ‘native cat’ (the western quoll *Dasyurus geoffroii*) *atyunpe* ‘perentie’ (*Varanus giganteus*), *akngwelye* ‘dog, dingo’ and *areng* ‘euro’ (*Macropus robustus*). These four names were identified from Spencer and Gillen’s detailed descriptions of Arrernte totemic geography in ‘The Arunta’ (Spencer

¹¹ Spencer and Gillen refer to Mt Blatherskite as Irpailpa (1927: 91).

and Gillen 1927). Spencer and Gillen provide maps showing the tracks followed by the four groups of Achilpa (*atyelpe*) and the spots at which they camped (Map insert in Volume I, Spencer & Gillen 1927); there is a detailed discussion of Gnoilya (*akngwelye*) (1927:90-91), Arunga (*arenge*) is identified as the Euro ancestor (1927: 92) and Echunpa (*tyunpe*) is mentioned in reference to a site near Simpson's Gap (1927:93).

O'Brien (1959) refers to support from some people in the town community to recognise the Arrernte:

There seems to be a desire for the use of native names in preference to those of explorers and old residents etc., by the handful of people who have some interest in these matters, and there is certainly some merit in this attitude. I explained to Mr. Drogemuller that it was the intention of this Branch to suggest to the Committee certain aboriginal names used by Spencer and Gillen in "The Arunta" in the new map series of Alice Springs, to be printed this year.

Vern O'Brien recalls that there may have been some consultation with Arrernte people in the seventies about street names. However, the names in the Gap were proposed by non-Indigenous people who were involved with the Arrernte, and these names came via a historical source (O'Brien, 2011, pers comm 24 May).

Two clusters of streets were named after Arrernte names for plants, birds and other natural things in the suburb of Braitling in 1974 and 1978. This theme is consistent with what was then a new trend, to name streets after plants. The spelling of these names follows a customary pattern, rather than any orthographic standard available at the time. I have been unable to determine the provenance of these names, but note the discussion of Erumba Street in 3.14.

3.13 Arrernte Street names in Stirling Heights

In the Stirling Heights subdivision on the west of town, all three streets were registered in 2005 with Arrernte names: Antulye Court, Mparntwe Drive and Irlpme Court. The

Stirling Heights names are notable amongst Arrernte street names because they are the only ones that have been awarded standard Eastern and Central Arrernte spellings, rather than reflecting a customary spelling, a spelling derived from historical sources or a deliberately Anglicised spelling. It is also notable that the Stirling Heights subdivision is located on land that was awarded under native title to the descendants of the original Arrernte inhabitants of the *Mparntwe*, *Antulye* and *Irlpme* estates (Hayes vs Northern Territory, 2000). These names were submitted to the NT Place Names committee for the new streets by the Native Title holding authority *Lhere Artepe*, as part of a commercial partnership with a land development company. These street names can be interpreted as a direct outcome of the Arrernte people's more recent commercial interest in this land, as well as a reference to the land holding descent groups who share this interest.

3.14 'Anglicisation' of spellings, and the backwash into contemporary interpretations

In a letter held in the NT Archives Vern O'Brien mentions an Arrernte name 'Para Lurknga', proposed for a park¹², and suggests that this could be anglicised to 'Paralurkna' (O'Brien 1959). Anglicisation involves representing the Arrernte word as text in a way that conforms with English spelling norms and pronunciation, without applying a consistent phonological orthographic representation based on phonological principles (Turpin 2004). In the case of Para Lurknga this involves replacing the velar nasal /ng/ with an /n/, and making it one word rather than a phrase. Incorporation of Arrernte words in this way is a marker of their status as loans into English, even though they may retain their reference to Arrernte words and concepts (Myers-Scotton, 2006:219-20). As street names these words are then used by the whole population with phonological integration as English words.

Apart from marking a word as a loan, Anglicised spelling also means that in many cases the origins of the word are obscured, and there is evidence that this can lead to a semantic reinterpretation. For example, Veronica Dobson has queried the English meaning for

¹² By Mr Drogemuller, following a suggestion by Pastor Albrecht, the superintendent of Hermannsburg Mission. It is not clear what the Arrernte source is, but 'Para' possibly derives from *apmere* 'place, camp, home', and 'lurknga' could be *alurrkngge* 'tendon, sinew'. As far I know, this proposed name was never taken up.

arenge provided by the NT Place Names Register and in Petrick (2005), suggesting that it is actually *arengke* ‘dog’, which is a synonym for *akngwelye*¹³. According to Veronica, Arrernte people believe that Arunga Street refers to *arengke* ‘dog’, not *arenge* ‘euro’ (V. Dobson 2011, pers comm 19 May)¹⁴. In this case it is likely that phonological integration has been mediated by English spelling norms. As a street name this word is customarily pronounced in Alice Springs English as **a-rang-ka**. This pronunciation reads orthographic **ng** as velar nasal-stop cluster, and approximates the Arrernte pronunciation of *arengke*. The Arrernte pronunciation of *arenge* ‘euro’, is closer to **a-ra-nge**, with **ng** read as a velar nasal, with no stop.

Erumba Street in Braitling suffers from a similar ambiguity. Petrick tentatively attributes the source as *ilwempe* ‘ghost gum’ (2005:64), however Veronica Dobson was certain that the name is actually derived from *yerrampe* ‘honey ant’, and that this is the meaning of this street for Arrernte people. According to Veronica people might say, in English, ‘oh you’re going back to honey ant street’¹⁵ (V. Dobson 2011, pers comm 19 May).

In the case of some Anglicised forms, the original meaning is as good as lost. Tmara Mara circuit was mentioned above, as having derived ultimately from the phrase *apmere mwerre* ‘good place’. In the spelling, the prenasalised stop /pm/ is rendered as an unusual consonant cluster /tm/. The use of orthographic T is here an abstract sign of prestopping (being predictably homorganic): allowing for the unfamiliarity of prestopping to non-speakers of Arandic languages. It is consistent with the way that Spencer and Gillen spelt the word *apmere* (1927:90), and may have been the source for Battarbee when he established the name. The customary pronunciation of this street name now is **ta-ma-ra ma-ra**, with vowel insertion to break up the ‘Tm’ spelling cluster. It is my impression that, while *apmere mwerre* is a familiar Arrernte phrase, even for incidental learners of

¹³ *arengke* is the standard word used for dog in Eastern dialects of Arrernte, as well as Eastern and Central Anmatyerr and Alyawarr.

¹⁴ This interpretation makes sense in terms of the ancestral story, as the two street names Arunga Street and Gnoilya Street match an important narrative element. In the ancestral time (*altyerre*), a local dog encountered an interloping white dingo who came from the south. The battle between the two formed many landscape features in the ranges surrounding the town, and the riverflats and foothills where the town is now built (also refer to Spencer and Gillen 1927; Brookes, 1991).

¹⁵ Access to original street naming documentation would assist in establishing whether this is a newer reanalysis of the meaning of this street name.

Arrernte, few people link this to Tmara Mara Circuit. However, it is widely recognised as being derived from Arrernte. This suggests that some names have quite empty symbolic content, and function mainly to index the Arrernte language as their source. It is an open question as to what extent other Arrernte words that have been deliberately chosen to name streets carry symbolic content within the wider language community. Even for those people who make the effort to learn the meanings of these words, I would suggest that their main semiotic function are indexical, as pointers to the existence of the Arrernte language and its speakers.

How this works on a chronological level is also of interest, as the original motivations and actions for installing these streets are now long past. The Stirling Heights names are recent, and draw on a land title ruling that is in the current memory of Arrernte people, and others in the community. The names thus convey a greater symbolic semiotic weight, in that the clan estate names Mparntwe, Antulye and Irlpme are ‘keystone’ Arrernte words – they have a privileged place in contemporary experience, and provide a link to the ancestral past. These words also have currency in English for the town community, and they are also now loanwords in English, at least by virtue of their status as street names.

However, they also convey an indexical meaning, in that they ‘point’ to the existence of Arrernte people. It can be argued that because of this indexicality the contemporary meanings of these words as Native Title holding groups are now more important, at least in some contexts, than other senses of these words that denote features of the country that these groups are linked to (ie *antulye* ‘shadow’; *irlpme* ‘narrow valley’). Through their instantiation on signage, they are also semiotically iconic, an emblem of Arrernte land rights over their country. The representation of these streets in the Arrernte orthography also is an index of power and control over the choice of how the Arrernte language is represented¹⁶. While the social and historical circumstances have changed since 1961, there are parallels here between the Arrernte totemic names chosen for streets in The Gap

¹⁶ However, what the customary pronunciation of these street names will be is still to be determined. Some non-Arrernte people are struggling with pronunciation and spelling of these street names. As an example, Irlpme Court is misspelt as the easier to pronounce Iripme Court in Petrick’s book (2005:98)

and the Stirling Heights clan estate names. Both make indexical and iconic reference to the Arrernte tenure over the landscape, and in both cases the naming is mediated via an external authority: in the first case Spencer and Gillen's ethnography (2007) and in the second, the Federal Court judgement awarding native title (Hayes vs NT 2000).

References

- Albrecht, P. (2002) *From mission to church: 1877-2002 Finke River mission*, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide.
- Austin-Broos, D. (2009) *Arrernte Present, Arrernte Past: Invasion, violence and imagination in Indigenous Central Australia*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Backhaus, P. (2007) *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters (136)
- Breen, Gavan. 2001. The wonders of Arandic phonology. In *Forty Years On. Ken Hale and Australian languages*, eds Jane Simpson, David Nash, Mary Laughren, Peter Austin and Barry Alpher, pp.45–69. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics Series.
- Brookes, D. (1991) *A Town like Mparntwe: a guide to the Dreaming tracks and sites of Alice Springs*, Alice Springs: IAD Press
- Clyne, M. & Kipp, S. (2006). Australia's Community Languages *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 180 pp7-21
- Coughlan, F 1991, *Aboriginal Town Camps and Tangentyere Council: The battle for self-determination in Alice Springs*, MA thesis, La Trobe University, Bundoora.
- Finnane, K. (2011) Law and order tops agenda. *Alice Springs News Online edition 3 February 2011*. <http://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/1801.html> [Accessed 24 May 2011]
- Foster, D, Mitchell, J, Ulrik, J and Williams, R 2005, *Population and Mobility in the Town Camps of Alice Springs*, A report prepared by Tangentyere Council Research Unit, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, Alice Springs.
- Harkins, J. (1994) *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal English and cross-cultural understanding*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press
- Hayes v Northern Territory (2000) Federal Court of Australia 1248 (9 September 1999) http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/federal_ct/2000/671.html [Accessed on 18 May 2011]
- Henderson, J. (1998) *Topics in Eastern and Central Arrernte Grammar*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Western Australia.
- Henderson, J. & Dobson, V. (1994) *Eastern and Central Arrernte dictionary*, Alice Springs: IAD Press
- Henson, B 1994, *A straight-out man: F.W. Albrecht and Central Australian Aborigines*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Inglis, K. S. (2005). *Sacred places: War memorials in the Australian landscape*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Kral, I. (2000) *The Socio-historical Development of Literacy in Arrernte*. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Melbourne Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics.
- Landry, R. & Bourhis, R. (1997) Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality. *Journal of language and social psychology*. 16 (1), 23-49
- Morgan, R. & Wilmot, H. (2010) Written proof: the appropriation of genealogical records in contemporary Arrernte society. *Land, Rights, Laws: Issues of Native Title* 4(5)

- Moss, R. (2010) *The Hard Light of Day: an artist's story of friendships in Arrernte country*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple voices: An introduction to Bilingualism*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Northern Territory Licencing Commission (2007) *Reason for Decision on an Application by Alice Springs Town Council for a Public Restricted Area*.
http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/.../07_Alice_Springs_Dry_Town_Decision.pdf
 [Accessed 23 May 2011]
- O'Brien, V. (1959) Letter from Vern O'Brien to the Acting Surveyor General, Lands and Survey Branch, Darwin, 10 February 1959. The Northern Territory Archives Service, Department of Lands, Survey and Mapping Division, NTRS 1084, Street names files relating to Alice Springs with 'SN' prefix 1952-1967
- Petrick, Josie (2005) [4th edition] *The History of Alice Springs through Landmarks and Street Names*, Self published – Jose Petrick PO Box 3973, Alice Springs, NT, 0871
- Purvis, B. (1952) Letter from Bob Purvis to Mr Hocking, 13 August 1952. The Northern Territory Archives Service, Department of Lands, Survey and Mapping Division, NTRS 1084, Street names files relating to Alice Springs with 'SN' prefix 1952-1967
- Roennfeldt, D (compiler) (2006) *Western Arrarnta Picture Dictionary*. Alice Springs: IAD Press
- Rothwell, N. (2011) Destroyed in Alice, The Australian Newspaper Online edition 19 February 2011. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/destroyed-in-alice/story-fn59niix-1226008040782> [Accessed 24 May 2011]
- Rubuntja, W. Green, J. & Rowse, T. (2002) *The town grew up dancing: the life and art of Wenten Rubuntja*, Alice Springs: Jukurrpa Books
- Simpson, J. Caffery, J. and McConvell, P. (2009). *Gaps in Australia's Indigenous language policy: dismantling bilingual education in the Northern Territory*. AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper No.24.
http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research_program/publications/discussion_papers
 [Accessed on 13 April 2011]
- Spencer, B. & Gillen, F.J. (1927) *The Arunta: a study of a stone age people (Volumes I&II)*. London: MacMillan and Co.
- Turpin, M. (2004) Have you ever wondered why Arrernte is spelt the way it is? Unpublished manuscript.
http://www.clc.org.au/People_Culture/language/arandic.pdf [Accessed on 23 May 2011]
- Wilkins, D. (1989) *Mparntwe Arrernte (Aranda): Studies in the Structure and Semantics of Grammar*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Australian National University.
- Wilkins, D. 2008 'W(h)ither Language, Culture and Education in Remote Indigenous Communities of the Northern Territory?' *Australian Review of Public Affairs* October 2008. <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2008/10/wilkins.html>
 [Accessed 8 June 2009].

Websites

Local Directories (2010/2011) *Alice Springs 2010/2011 Phone Directory*, Local Directories Ltd, <http://www.localdirectories.com.au>

Northern Territory Place Names Register, <http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/placenames/>