

ABOUT THE BLACKMANS – 2016

David Blackman is a linguist with Wycliffe Bible Translators and AuSIL (the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages), doing translation and literacy work with the Alyawarr ["al YAH wa ra"] people of Central Australia. David lost his wife, Marie, to a brain tumour in December 2004.

David grew up in Sydney. After leaving school, he trained as an English teacher and librarian. His first job was in Alice Springs, which allowed him to visit schools in many isolated Aboriginal communities. He later worked in Canberra at the National Library of Australia. He joined Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1990, and in 1991 was assigned to restart the Alyawarr translation program. This program had commenced in 1972, but had been on hold for a few years when he arrived. Initially he worked alone, then in 1994 David Strickland joined him [In 2002 David S began work in Anmatyerr, a neighbouring language]. In 1995 David and Susan Moore came to work in another part of the language area. They were serving with the Finke River Mission, a ministry of the Lutheran Church.

David married Marie Geytenbeek in September 1996. Her parents were also translators with Wycliffe and AuSIL. Her father is now a widower and retired in Perth, but he continues to work as he is able with the Nyangumarta people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. After attending high school in Darwin, Marie studied biology in Adelaide, and then worked in biochemical research laboratories. She joined Wycliffe in 1989, and in 1990 began doing literacy work amongst the Ngaanyatjarra ["NGAN a tha ra"] people of the Western Desert of Central Australia, with co-worker Jan Mountney. Their task was to raise the number of people who could use the Ngaanyatjarra New Testament, first published in 1991. A Shorter Bible, which included Old Testament selections was published in 2005. An enlarged Shorter Bible was published in May 2008. Marie worked in that area until she and David married.

The Blackmans worked in an Aboriginal community of about 150 Alyawarr people called Wetenngerr [WOO ten nger a]. This community is on Epenarra, a cattle station of 2,658 sq km (about 1,000 square miles). The nearest town is Tennant Creek (NT), about 220km by road to the northwest. Alice Springs is about 550km by road to the southwest. The cattle station was established in 1952, and the residents of Wetenngerr are mostly descendants of the Aboriginal stockmen who helped establish and run the station.

David has two sons. Paul was born in February 1999 and Simon in April 2001. At Wetenngerr there were plenty of playmates for both of them amongst the Alyawarr children, and lots of 'relatives' to watch over them. After Marie's death, the family moved to Alice Springs. Paul is now in Year 12 and hoping to study Physiotherapy or Sports Science. Simon is now in Year 9.

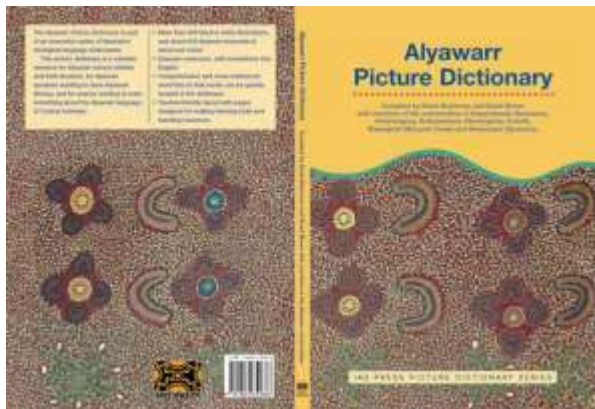
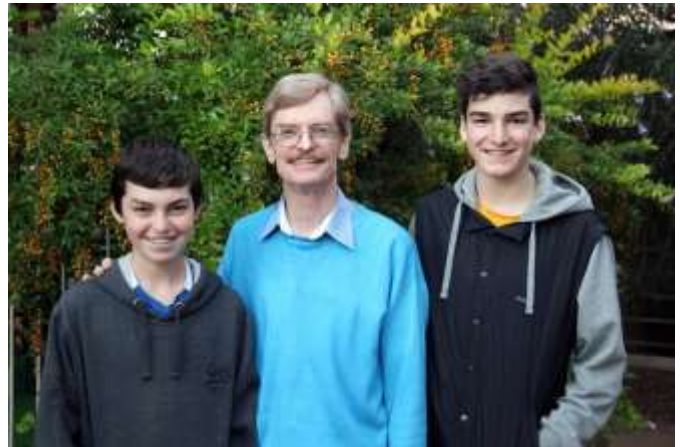
There are about 1,800 speakers of the Alyawarr language, who are scattered across a large area to the north and northeast of Alice Springs. David's job is to learn and analyse Alyawarr, translate Scripture, teach people to read and write their own language. This is a very big task, which will keep him busy for a long time.

The first Alyawarr Mini-Bible was published in 2003. It contained the combined work of the whole team; extensive selections from the books of Genesis and Exodus, and full translations of the books of Mark, Luke, Acts, Galatians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Titus and James. David edited the new edition, which adds extensive selections from the books of 1&2 Samuel, and full translations of

Matthew, John and Romans. It was launched on Palm Sunday 2010. Other books are at various stages of the translation process, and will appear in a future edition.

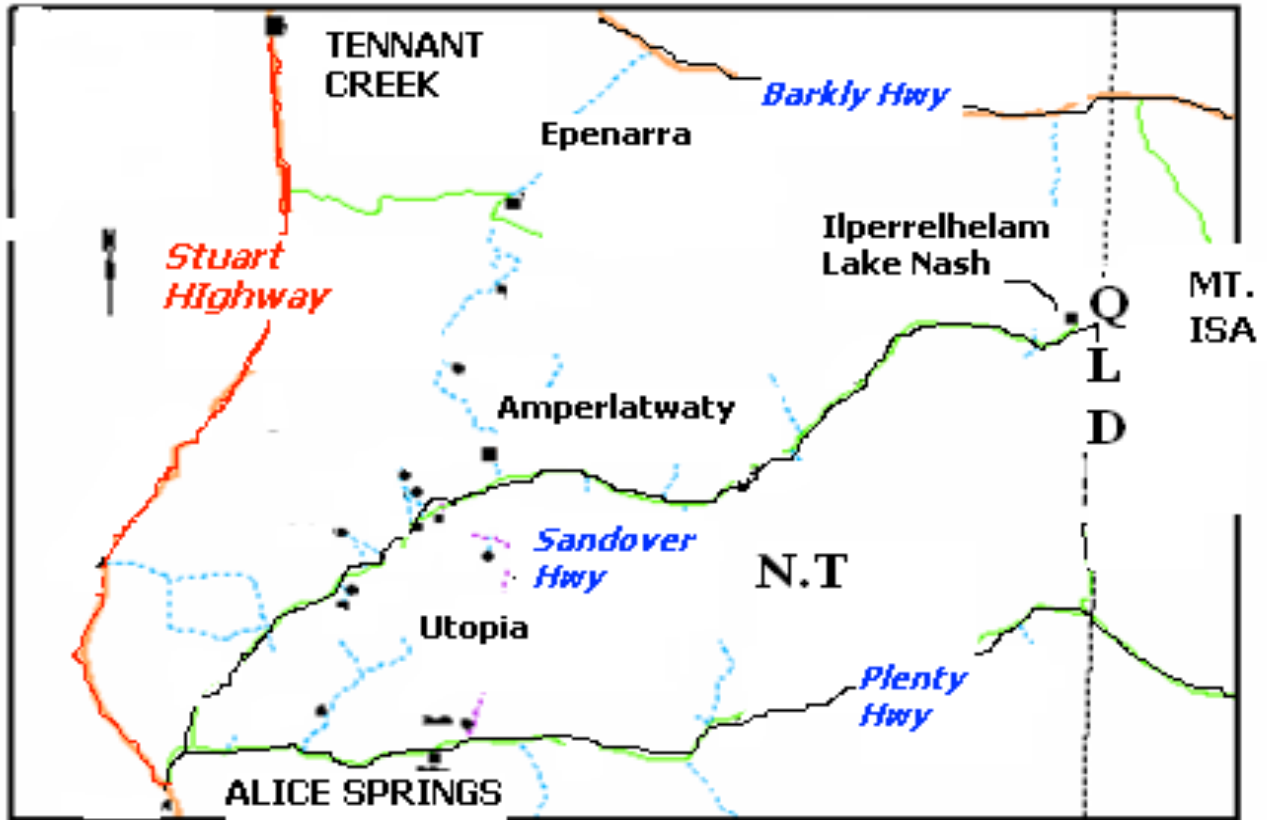
David co-compiled the *Alyawarr Picture Dictionary* with David Moore, which was published in 2004. A revised edition was published in 2008. It is also accessible online in interactive form.

Dictionary, literacy and translation work continue, albeit at a considerably reduced pace for the moment. David finds single parenthood a constant challenge. He is currently editing the new *Alyawarr to English Dictionary*, as the 1992 edition is out of print. He hopes to be able to submit the file to the publisher by mid-year.

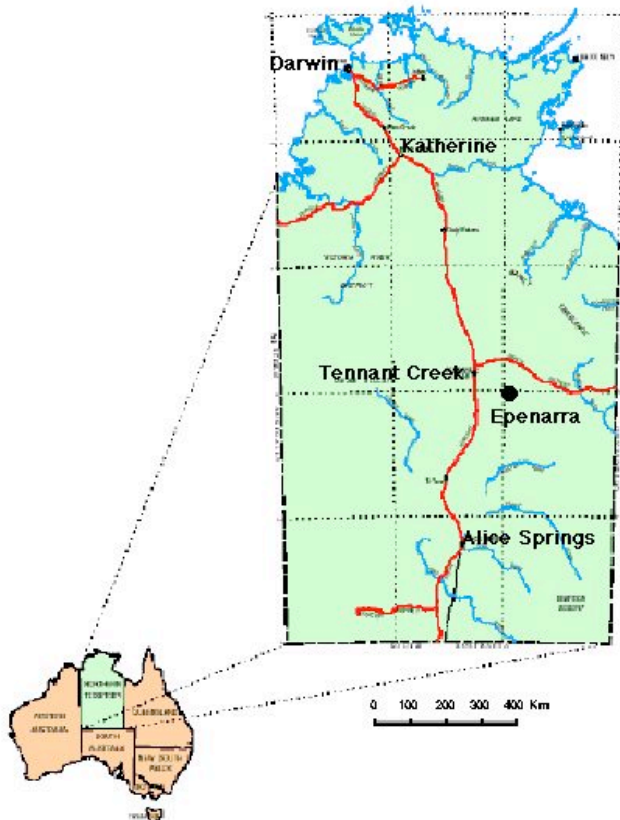


Simon David Paul
(apologies for the dated photo – Simon is now taller than David)

Map of the Alyawarr Region, N.T



↑ Map by David Moore



← Map by Richard Davies