ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2019-058 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2019-3-07
Primary Person submitting request: Kirk Miller
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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

.PLEASE NOTE: This completed form will become part of the public record of this change request and the history of the ISO 639-3 code set and will be posted on the ISO 639-3 website.

Types of change requests

Type of change proposed (check one):
1. □ Modify reference information for an existing language code element
2. □ Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group
3. □ Retire a language code element from use (duplicate or non-existent)
4. ☑ Expand the denotation of a code element through the merging one or more language code elements into it (retiring the latter group of code elements)
5. □ Split a language code element into two or more new code elements
6. ☐ Create a code element for a previously unidentified language

For proposing a change to an existing code element, please identify:

Affected ISO 639-3 identifier:
Associated reference name:

4. Expand the denotation of a code element through merging of one or more code elements

(a) List the languages (identifier and name) to be merged into this code element and retired from use: [xpt] Punthamara, [gdt] Kungardutyi, [ntg] Ngantangarra, [eaa] Karenggapa, all or part of [xwk] Wangkumara, and perhaps part of (?)[gll] Garlali, depending on the scopes of [xwk] and [gll].

I suspect that [xwk] should simply be merged into Wilson River and [gll] be ignored, but the descriptions in the literature are confused and the scopes people understand for those codes are not obvious, so the Register may wish to review the claims I cite below.

I suggest the codes be merged under the name Wilson River, with the exonym Parpagunu (or perhaps the spelling ‘Palpakunu’) as an alternative name.
(b) Rationale for change

Breen (2009) speaks of “the language of which Wangkumara [xwk] and Punthamara [gdt]
are dialects”. AIATSIS summarizes multiple sources that suggest these ISO names, as well as several others, are varieties of a single language. For example, under the ‘comment’ tab for reference code (L64) Parpagunu, AIATSIS notes,

Breen (1971:18) ... says that [Parpagunu] is used to refer to the Wilson River group of
dialects, i.e. Mambangura L20, modern Wangkumara L25 [now code L68, ISO xwk] and
Kungatutji L16 [ISO gdt], Punthamara L26 [ISO xpt] and others now extinct* and Breen
(1967:2) states that the [varieties] spoken along the Wilson River are identical:
Bundhamara L26 [ISO xpt], Gungadudji L16 [ISO gdt], Wanggumara L25 [ISO xwk] and
Ngandangura L30 [ntg].

As for the comment ‘and others now extinct’, that was in 1971. It appears that all the
Wilson River dialects are now extinct.

Bowern also (p.c. 2019) speaks of merging Karenggapa with “Wangkumara / Punthamara /
Ngantangara, etc.”

I will start this argument by presenting the more confused language names, Wangkumara
and Kalali/Garlali, and the distinction between Wilson River and Bulloo River.

Wilson River vs Bulloo River varieties

‘Kalali/Garlali’ and ‘Wangkumara’ are primarily ethnic labels. Tindale gives different
territories for the Kalali and Wangkumara, so these do appear to be distinct peoples, rather
than synonyms, perhaps peoples who migrated together from the Bulloo River to the
Wilson River area, where they adopted the local language. Both the Kalali and
Wangkumara peoples of the Bulloo River and of the Wilson River apparently spoke
different languages in these two locations, and those languages belonged to different
branches of Pama-Nyungan (Karna-Maric ‘frindge’ / Pama-Nyungan isolate for Bulloo River
vs Eastern Karnic for Wilson River). It’s possible that some of the ambiguity of the names
in the literature is due to the languages being mislabeled. Regardless, when AIATSIS
decided that the names Garlali (Kalali) and Wangkumara were ambiguous, they split old
(L25) Wangkumara into (L25) Wangkumara and (L68) Wangkumara, and old (D30) Kalali
into (D30) Kullilli and (D71) Galali. The old codes, D30 and L25, are now restricted to the
Bulloo River location (approximately = ISO [gll] Garlali), and the new codes, L68 and D71,
for the Wilson River location (the present ISO change request). Note however that, in the
various AUSTLANG articles mentioning Kalali and Wangkumara, there seem to be a few
updating errors, with L25/L68 and D30/D71 sometimes given the opposite readings. The
discussions under the ‘comment’ tabs at the AUSTLANG articles for L25, L68, D30 and
D71 are relevant to this request, but due to length I will not repeat them here.

It is only the varieties of Kalali/Garlali and Wangkumara spoken in the region of the Wilson
River that belong in this change request. The wording of ISO change request 2012-077
that produced [gll] Garlali and [xwk] Wangkumara suggest that [gll] might be intended as
the Bulloo River variety of Kalali, and [xwk] as the ‘modern’ Wilson River variety of Wangkumara, which are the more common uses of these names in the literature. If the registrar agrees, it would not be necessary to split the ISO codes the way that AIATSIS split their reference codes for Kalali and Wangkumara. [gll] could be omitted from this request and [xwk] merged in its entirely. If a more generic reading of these names is decided to be relevant, then only the Wilson River varieties of [gll] and [xwk] should be merged with [xpt], [gdt], [eaa] and [ntg] as the Wilson River language, with the Bulloo River varieties of [gll] and [xwk] merged with each other under a separate change request. Or perhaps the scope of [xwk] Wangkumara could simply be narrowed or clarified before merging into the Wilson River language.

Wangkumara [xwk]

As for whether to split [xwk] Wangkumara, Breen (2007) speaks of a 91% cognacy figure from an earlier publication being for,

“Kalali and ‘Wonkomarra’ (Myles 1886), and ‘Wonkomarra’ is clearly a different language from modern Wangkumara as recorded by several linguists. This count is simply a comparison of Kalali from two sources.”


It would appear that ‘old’ Bulloo River ‘Wangkumara’ refers specifically to the Myles/Curr word list that Breen identifies as a second source of Kalali/Garlali. If that source (or the location it was collected from) is not explicitly part of ISO [xwk] Wangkumara, then it could perhaps be ignored and all of [xwk] merged into Wilson River. Minkabari and L43 Pitjara do not have ISO codes to worry about.

Note per Bowern (p.c.) below, when Breen says ‘Wangkumara’ he means the Wilson River variety.

Garlali [gll]

The argument for merging Wilson River Kalali/Garlali is weaker than that for the others. The relevant variety may not be included under ISO code [gll] and may even be spurious. Under the article for reference code (D71), AIATSIS says,

Waŋkumara (Gaḷali) (D71) or the Wilson River Galali (D71) is very close to modern Waŋkumara L68 [xwk] and Bundamara L26 [xpt] (McDonald & Wurm 1979:1) … Bowern (2001) suspects that McDonald and Wurm’s Waŋkumara (Gaḷali) (D71) is neither Wangkumara L68 nor Garlali D30 but Punthamara L26 [xpt]. On the other hand, Wafer and Lissarrague (2008:293, fn. 205) assume that it is Wilson River Kalali (D71).
It’s not clear from this if ‘Wilson River Galali (D71)’ is a dialect of the same language as ‘modern’ Wangkumara [xwk] and Punthamara [xpt], or a closely related but distinct language. However, AIATSIS does not establish it as a distinct language, and if ISO [gll] Garlali only covers Bulloo River Kalali, the point is moot.

Breen (2009), in the section ‘Charlie Phillips and his Languages’, describes how what McDonald & Wurm (1979) refer to as ‘Wankumara (Galali)’, which Bowern identified as Punthamara [xpt] (that is, under the scope of this Wilson River proposal) and AIATSIS encodes as (D71) Galali, was probably simply Wangkumara [xwk]/L68. He says the use of the name ‘Punthamara’ may have been due to that being the geographically closest dialect of the Punthamara/Wangkumara language. The informant, Charlie Phillips, was ethnic Kalali [gll] but was not proficient in that language, and referred to the language he did speak fluently, Wangkumara, sometimes as Wangkumara and sometimes as Kalali, perhaps depending on whether his wife (who knew the facts) was present. Thus it would seem the Wilson River variety of Kalali/Garlali (AIATSIS D71) may be spurious, and if so [gll] may not be relevant to this change request.

Note per Bowern (p.c.) below, when Breen says ‘Kalali/Garlali’ he means the Bulloo River variety.

**Kungardutyi [gdt]**

In their comments at (L16) Gungadidji, AIATSIS / AUSTLANG says,

*The name Kungatutji (L16) appears to have been used to refer to two different language varieties, according to Breen (1971:15): that reported by Heagney in Curr (1886-87:374-381) is closely related to Kungkari L38 and Birria L36, while ‘modern’ Kungatutji is ‘almost identical to Punthamara and modern Wangkumara’. Breen (1990:64) later says that Kungadichi (L16) (the one in Curr) is likely not a genuine language name at all as the data appears to be a composite of Pirriya L36 and Kungkari.*

The ISO change request 2012-119 that established [gdt] says that “It is listed as an independent language in AUSTLANG”, but the AUSTLANG description of neither variety qualify as an independent language. However, given that the change request goes on to give Bowern as a reference, it was presumably intended to create a code for ‘modern’ Kungardutyi. Thus merger into Wilson River rather than retirement as unsubstantiated would appear to be the appropriate remedy.

**Karenggapa [eaa]**

Under the comment tab at (L15) Karenggapa, AUSTLANG says,

*The identity of this name is not clear: Karenggapa appears to be either an alternative name of Wangkumara L68 or a dialect of Wangkumara. Capell (1963) reports that Garanggaba (L15) is listed by Tindale. Beckett (1958), however, says the name was not recognised by his informants and could be an alternative name for Wonggumara (L25 or L68?). According
to Hercus and Austin (2004:213-14), the people living in the area identified by Tindale as Karenggapa were evidently speakers of a form of Wangkumara.

[The identity of ‘Wonggumara’ was not ascertained when the Wangkumara code was split into L25 Bulloo River + L68 Wilson River.]

Breen (p.c. 2019) said, “I believe Kalali (or Galali) is best classified as an isolate within the Pama-Nyungan family. It was regarded as part of the Karnic Subgroup (in Pama-Nyungan) for a long time. See my article ‘Reassessing Karnic’ (especially section 7) in Australian Journal of Linguistics Vol 27 no. 2, 2007:175-199. Pitjara¹ and Minkabari were probably dialects but these names are no longer remembered. Karenggapa was probably a dialect of Wangkumara, but it too is no longer remembered.”

That would be ‘modern’ Wangkumara’, not the language of Curr’s 19th-century wordlist which Breen identifies as Kalali. Breen (p.c.) also says he believes that Bulloo Lakes, the location of Karenggapa given in AUSTLANG, is in Wangkumara territory. When asked about this apparent confusion in the AIATSIS reference code for the Wangkumara being identified with Karenggapa, Claire Bowern (p.c. 2019) said,

“I think [Karenggapa] should be with the Wilson River. That is, with Wangkumara/ Punthamara/Ngantangara, etc, not with Kalali/Bulloo River. [...] Tindale’s location gives Karenggapa in the NE corner of what others put as Wadikali. That adjoins Wangkumara (Wilson River language), Garlali, and Nhirrpi. Breen calls these two languages “Wangkumara” and “Garlali”, though with the proviso that Wangkumara he recorded is different from some of the other sources also called Wangkumara.”

And in conclusion,

“I would merge it into the Wilson river language code.”

Punthamara [xpt]

Under (L26) Punthamara, AUSTLANG reports,

Breen (2007 p.c.) suspects that this is in a dialectal relationship with Wangkumara L68. Note that Bowern (2001) suspects that the language termed Wankumara (Galali) D71 in McDonald & Wurm (1979) is a description of neither Wangkumara L68 nor Garlali D30 but Punthamara. Breen (1971:18) says that Palpakunu L64 is a Jandruwanda L18 term for the ‘Wilson River group of dialects, i.e. Mambangura L20, modern Wangkumara L68 and Kungatutji L16, Punthamara and others now extinct’. Breen (1967:2) also states that the languages (though he goes on to refer to them as tribes) spoken along the Wilson River are identical: Bundhamara (L26), Gungadudji L16, Wanggumara L68 and Ngandangura L30.

¹. This ‘Pitjara’ would be AIATSIS code (L43), distinct from the ISO language with the same name, [bym] Bidyara. It is discussed in the change request to retire ISO code [ekc] Eastern Karnic.
See under Kalali above for comments on Bowern’s identification of McDonald & Wurm’s Wankumara (Galali).

Ngantangarra [ntg]

Under (L30) Ngandangara, AUSTLANG reports,

Tindale (1974) treats Ngandangara as the name of a group whose language is Jarumarra L56. However, according to Breen (2007 p.c.) Ngandangara and Jarumarra are distinct varieties which are in a dialectal relationship with Wangkumara L25. Bowern (2001:248) also treats Ngandangara as being very closely related to Wangkumara L25.

Jarumarra = Yarumarra = Eromarra has not been assigned an ISO code.

The proposed names

My suggestion of “Wilson River” as the name of what Breen (2007) refers to as “the language of which Wangkumara and Punthamara are dialects” comes from wording at AUSTLANG of the “Wilson River group of dialects”, and from the statement under (L25) Wangkumara and repeated elsewhere that “It appears that some speakers of the Bulloo River Wangkumara moved from the Bulloo River area (Thargomindah) to the Wilson River area (Nockatunga area) and adopted some features of the Wilson River language (Breen 1971:12),” though perhaps by the latter they’re using ‘Wilson River’ as an attributive rather than as a language name.

The spellings “Parpagunu” and “Palpakunu” come from comments at the AUSTLANG entries (L64) Parpagunu and (L16) Gungadidji, respectively, as quoted above.

6. Create a code element for an unidentified language through merging of one or more code elements

   a. Name of missing language: Wilson River

   b. State the case that this language has not been included in any other language: This language is being created by the merger of five languages, none of their codes should be preferred to any other, so a new code is requested.

Sources of information

Please use whichever of the points below are relevant in order to document the sources on which you have based the above proposal.
(a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:

(b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe: Gavan Breen and Claire Bowern, emails in February 2019.

(c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):


Please return this form to:
ISO 639-3 Registrar
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems
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Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:
