

Beds are burning in Pitjantjatjara

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It was a cover version of an Australian classic with a very local twist. Shadow Minister for the Environment, and ex front man of Midnight Oil had the opportunity to hear his famous song 'Beds Are Burning' sung in Pitjantjatjara.

Shadow Minister for the Environment, and ex front man of Midnight Oil had the opportunity to hear his famous song 'Beds Are Burning' sung in Pitjantjatjara. The song was performed for the Alice Springs launch of the Ngapartji Ngapartji website and tour. The interactive theatre production is about the effect of British nuclear testing near Maralinga in the 1950s. The show, performed by Trevor Jamieson uses song and audience interaction to explain how nuclear testing affected the Spinifex people of the South Australian desert. Trevor Jamieson has a very personal link with the story which delves into his own family's interaction with the testing. The show opens with elders encouraging audience members to stand up and sing along in Pitjantjatjara. Jamieson says the theatre has had a positive effect on all of those involved. "It's definitely opened up a lot of skills, mainly in theatre. A lot of their communication and social skills have really improved. One of the best things is just making sure they become tutors within their own community." The show also has an online component, which artistic director and co-writer Scott Rankin says has had around 50,000 hits so far. The aim of the website is to teach Pitjantjatjara to a wider audience. However, Rankin says the website plays a far more important role in protecting Indigenous languages. "We are perpetrating a cultural and language genocide in this country with loss of language. It's the continent in the world with the greatest loss of language...The fact that people are becoming concerned about that loss of language is no surprise."ABC Radio, Alice Springs by Nicole Lee