

## ***Moli det bigibigi* by Karen Manbulloo**

About the Kriol language and the Binjari Buk project  
Written by Denise Angelo, linguist/literacy consultant

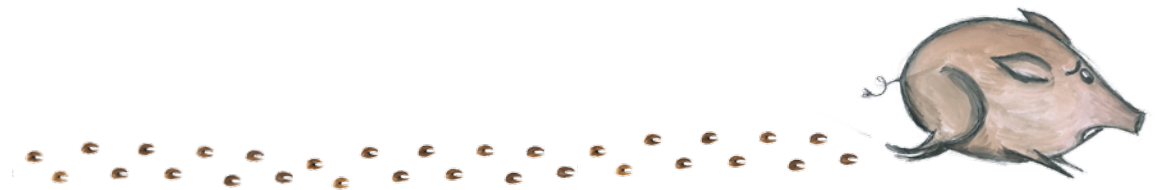
## Why is *Moli det bigibigi* written in Kriol?

Karen Manbulloo, the author, chose to write her story, ***Moli det bigibigi*** in Kriol with an English translation. She used this combination of languages because Kriol is her first language, and the first language of her family too. Kriol is spoken by just about everybody in Binjari, the Aboriginal community where Karen lives near Katherine in the Northern Territory.

Kriol is also spoken in Aboriginal communities across a large area of northern Australia, including most of the

Katherine region, as well as the Kimberley of Western Australia and into the Gulf country of Queensland.

For Karen Manbulloo, Kriol is an authentic language choice for telling the story of ***Moli det bigibigi***. As the everyday language of her community, Binjari, it is the genuine and local way that everybody talks to each other and tells stories here.



# More about Kriol

Kriol is the most widely-spoken Aboriginal language in Australia today; it is spoken by an estimated 20,000 or more Aboriginal people in communities throughout a large part of northern Australia.

Kriol is a real, full and vibrant language. Kriol speakers can express anything that can be said in other languages. Kriol has been used to translate Shakespeare and the Bible. There is a Kriol news broadcast each weekday on ABC radio in Darwin. Kriol speakers who are bilingual in English are employed as interpreters and in other roles where clear communication with Kriol-speaking community members is vital.

Kriol is a 'new' Aboriginal language with a special history, not an original traditional Aboriginal language. The roots of Kriol are in Aboriginal people's contact history on cattle stations, missions and reserves, where speakers of different languages used particular 'ways of talking', for communicating together. Such 'contact languages' bridged across all the different language groups, including English.

In some places, the contact language has become the language that everybody in the community speaks, so it isn't just a bridge across languages any more. When contact languages become the first language of a whole generation, they are called 'creoles'. Kriol, the language of the ***Moli det bigibigi*** story, is one kind of creole, the kind spoken in Binjari and across much of northern Australia.

Kriol varies a bit from place to place. Kriol speakers can usually tell where other Kriol speakers come from, because of their accent or some different words. Just like Australian English speakers can tell that someone comes from New Zealand, or North America or the United Kingdom because of their accent when they speak English.

As far as we know, ***Moli det bigibigi*** is easy for all Kriol speakers to understand, but there might be some things that Kriol speakers from other parts of the country might say a little differently.

# Kriol Spelling

**Moli det bigibigi** employs the Kriol spelling system used in the Northern Territory. It is the same one that is used, for example, on the Ngukurr Aboriginal Language Centre's website (<http://www.ngukurrlc.org.au>), in the hundreds of books produced for the Barunga Kriol-English bilingual program (see Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages (LAAL) <http://laal.cdu.edu.au>) or in the Kriol Holi Baibul (Holy Bible).

The letters representing consonants do not hold many surprises for English speakers: b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, w, y have much the same sound value as they do in English. Some of these letters occur as special pairs (digraphs): sh, th, tj, kw, rr (like the rolled 'r' in Scots English).

One point to note is that Kriol has no 'silent letters', so Kriol **ni** is the equivalent of English 'knee'. Also, not all the letters of the English alphabet are employed for writing Kriol. For example, there is one sound that in English can be written variously as 'k', 'c' or 'ck'. Kriol covers all these with just 'k'.

The Kriol vowel spellings might take a little getting used to for English speakers (but they would be quite familiar for people who know other Aboriginal language writing systems or European languages, like Italian):

a like in English **a**sk, **a**bout

e like in English ne**t**, **e**gg

i like in English **i**t, hi**d**

o like in English sho**p**, no**d**, sometimes more like **o**r

u like in English pu**t**, bu**l**

ai like in English **i**, sky, pi**e**

ei like in English sa**y**, fa**c**e, rai**n**

oi like in English bo**i**l, to**y**

au like in English co**w**, ho**u**se

Readers should note that a different spelling system has been developed for Kriol in Western Australia by the Aboriginal Kimberley Language Resource Centre and details are available on their website (<https://www.klrc.org.au/kimberley-kriol/overview>).

## Reading in your first language

It is a true delight for Aboriginal children from Binjari and the many other Kriol-speaking communities across northern Australia to have a story like ***Moli det bigibigi*** told in Kriol.

Many of us take it for granted that our first experience with books will be in the language we speak. But this is not the everyday experience for many Aboriginal children who speak Indigenous languages, traditional languages or a 'new' language like Kriol.

***Moli det bigibigi*** is doubly delightful for Kriol-speaking children: it is a story well told in a language well understood.

## Attitudes to Kriol

In the past, the Kriol language was sometimes put down, generally by people who didn't speak it. Some people wrongly thought that Kriol was just poor English, but of course most people nowadays know that Kriol is a different language from English, a new Aboriginal language.

Some people still feel a sadness about Australian history that has brought new languages like Kriol into being, but not fostered the original, traditional languages that connect Aboriginal people with their land. Many Aboriginal people, including Kriol speakers, are working really hard to bring their traditional language heritage back into use.



## Kriol speakers' other languages

Kriol speakers are still connected with their traditional languages and they speak these languages as much as they have had the opportunity to hear, learn and use them.

Kriol speakers are like other Aboriginal people who learn an Indigenous language as their mother tongue because it is what their family and community speak around them: they often only start learning English when they go to school.



# The Binjari Buk project

**Moli det bigibigi** is one of nine books that make up the Binjari Buk (Binjari Book) series. The books were all written in Kriol, with English translations, by Aboriginal women from Binjari, and were published by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation through its Community Literacy Project program.

## Board books

**Olkainawan kalawan loli** *Lollies of all different colours* by Milly Raymond  
Colourful lollies and the joys of sharing them.

**Yakai! Beibigel!** *Oh no! Baby girl!*  
by Maureen Hodgson  
Helping to keep this young toddler out of trouble.

**Ola kala en namba** *Colours and numbers*  
by Bernadine Booth  
An early counting and colour book.

## Picture books

**Moli det bigibigi** *Molly the pig* by Karen Manbulloo  
Thanks to breakfast cereal, Molly grows bigger than the dogs.

**Tudei en longtaim** *Now and then* by Stella Raymond  
A look at some of the ways modern life is different to the old days.

**Fishing – lenimbat ola biginini** *Fishing know-how – teaching children* by Marilyn Frith  
Tips for catching and cooking fish Binjari style.



# The Binjari Buk project

## Chapter books

### **Roki det kenggurru** *Rocky the kangaroo*

by Maureen Hodgson

True stories about Rocky the boxing kangaroo.

### **Hanting gada biliken** *Hunting with billycans*

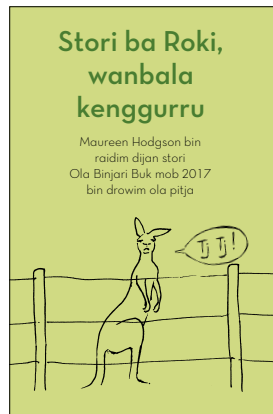
by Maureen Hodgson

How can Dad hunt when the kids scare everything away?

### **Hanting gada trekta en treila** *Hunting with*

*a tractor and trailer* by Maureen Hodgson

It's been a great day out bush, but on the way back home...



**Top:** Some of the Binjari women authors at the Binjari Buk launch in Katherine, NT, December 2017: (left to right) Maureen Hodgson, Karen Manbulloo, Stella Raymond and Marilyn Frith.

**Bottom:** School children from St Joseph's College in Katherine, each with a Binjari Buk.

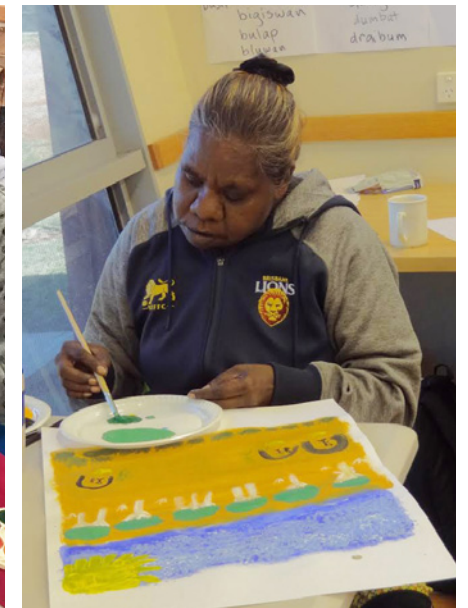


# The Binjari Buk project

The illustrations for these Binjari Buk were all done by women from Binjari, Katherine (and elsewhere) who joined in the wonderful art workshops with artist Julie Haysom; Karen Manbulloo, Daniella Carlton, Natasha Waterloo, Bernadine Booth, Tasiana Douglas, Halrisha Hodgson, Sylvia Birdum, Rozelle Frith, Marilyn Frith, Sarah Lewis, Marisa Smiler-Cairns, Cindy Manfong and Denise Angelo. Julie Haysom encouraged every participant and much of the artwork in the Binjari Buk was co-designed with her skilled input.

For ***Moli det bigibigi***, thanks go to Julie Haysom herself for illustrations of the boy and the fence, Cindy Manfong for the bush country painting (cover and inside) and Molly's favourite food and to Denise Angelo for the drawings of Molly and the dogs. Denise Angelo also provided Kriol literacy learning and linguistic know-how.

We would also like to thank HarperCollins Publishers Australia Pty Ltd, in particular Eve Tonelli and Hazel Lam and 1010 Printing International Limited for making the publication of this book possible.



Top: (left to right) Bernadine Booth, Sylvia Maroney, Julie Haysom.  
Bottom left: (left to right) Natasha Waterloo, Halrisha Hodgson.  
Bottom right: Sylvia Birdum.



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