

Talking the talk

By **BELINDA F SCOTT**

GUMBAYNGGIRR, the language of the original inhabitants of the Coffs Coast, arrives on the Sydney academic scene today.

The Aboriginal language will be taught in Sydney for the first time this week as part of the University of Sydney summer school 2007, beginning this morning.

Among the students in Sydney will be 2004 Australian idol winner Casey Donovan, her cousin, fellow singer Emma Donovan, and former senator Aden Ridgeway, all of whom have Gumbaynggirr family connections.

Welcoming students to the classes will be the director of Nambucca Heads' Muurrbay Language Centre, Gumbaynggirr lan-

guage teacher Ken Walker and fellow Nambucca language teacher Gary Williams.

Mr Walker said he was keen to encourage Aboriginal people everywhere to reclaim their mother tongue.

Gary Williams said yesterday the introduction of his language to Sydney was exciting but the week-long intensive course would only be able to give the students a 'taste' of the Gumbaynggirr language, land and culture, with stories, songs and information interwoven with language lessons.

He said only 20 places had been available for the introductory course and people had had to be turned away, with preference for the limited places going to people with connections to Gumbaynggirr country, even though they now lived in Sydney or Brisbane.

"These are people who would not otherwise have access to language or country, because they are working away," he said.

"They can touch base and get a feel of the language. People want their children to have some knowledge.

"It is not a straight language course, you have to hang it off the country and the culture to put things in context."

Sharon Smith, of Stuarts Point, and Michael Jarrett, from Nambucca Heads, will be tutoring the course under team leader and language teacher Brother Steve Morelli.

Gumbaynggirr will be the second Aboriginal language offered by Sydney University, which already offers the North West NSW language Gamilaraay.