

Endangered languages listing: KARAWA [xrw]

Population of language area: 63; number of speakers: less than 63 (1995).

Karawa is classified by Laycock (1973) as a separate language, spoken only in the village of Bulawa (now called Pulwa), Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea. Pulwa is situated south of the main Torricelli range; rivers in the area drain south toward the Sepik River. The villagers of Pulwa practise a mixture of agriculture and hunting; in 1995 the population was sixty-three. Karawa is classified as a member of the Ram family within the larger Sepik family of languages and is closely related to its western neighbour Pouye (Bouye) (Laycock 1973).

In 1995, the villagers of Pulwa said that Karawa was dying (Ferree and Ferree 1995). Pulwa people and speakers of Pouye almost always used Pouye when speaking to each other. Children from the village were speaking Pouye as their first language, which shows that Pouye is being used in the homes in place of Karawa. It is significant that language shift has been to a neighbouring language (Pouye) rather than to Tok Pisin, which is also spoken by villagers.

Language resources:

None.

References:

Ethnologue (15th edition). 2005. Ed. Raymond G. Gordon. Dallas: SIL International.

<http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Ferree, Steve and Sharon Ferree. 1995. Sociolinguistic report of the Pouye (Bouye) language group. Unpublished manuscript. Ukarumpa: SIL.

Laycock, Donald C. 1973. *Sepik languages – checklist and preliminary classification* (Pacific Linguistics B-25). Canberra: Australian National University.