Well I heard it on the radio
And I saw it on the television
Back in 1988, all those talking politicians

Words are easy, words are cheap
Much cheaper than our priceless land
But promises can disappear
Just like writing in the sand

Treaty yeah treaty now treaty yeah treaty now
Nhima djat’pangarri nhima walangwalang
Nhe djat’payatpa nhima gaya’ nhe marrtjini yakarray
Nhe djatpa nhe walang
Gumurr-djararrk Gutjuk
Nhima gayakaya nhe gaya’ nhe marrtjini walangwalang nhe ya
Nhima djatpa nhe walang
Gumurr-djararrk yawirriny’
Nhaya’ nhe marrtjini gaya’ nhe marrtjini
Gayakaya nhe gaya’ nhe marrtjini walangwalang
Nhima djatpa nhe walang
Gumurr-djararrk nhe yà, e i, e i, e i i, i i i, i i i, i i

Treaty ma

This song was written after Bob Hawke, in his famous response to the Barunga Statement (1988), said there would be a Treaty between Indigenous Australians and the Australian Government by 1990. The intention of this song was to raise public awareness about this so that the government would be encouraged hold to his promise. The song became a number-one hit, the first ever to be sung in a Yolngu language, and caught the public’s imagination. Though it borrows from rock ‘n’ roll, the whole structure of “Treaty” is driven by the beat of the djatpangarri that I’ve incorporated in it. It was an old recording of this historic djatpangarri that triggered the song’s composition. The man who originally created it was my gurru (maternal great-grandmother’s husband) and he passed away a long time ago in 1978. He was a real master of the djatpangarri style. (MM)