



The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

C09/16038

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

19 NOV 2009

Dear Mrs Irwin:

Thank you for your letter of 3 September 2009 concerning the recently submitted petition regarding Indigenous languages in Australia.

I am pleased to report that a National Indigenous Languages Policy was jointly announced on 9 August 2009 by myself, as the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, and the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP.

The policy confirmed the Australian Government's commitment to keeping Indigenous languages alive and supporting Indigenous Australians to connect with their language and culture.

Importantly, this is the first dedicated national Indigenous languages policy Australia has adopted.

In collaboration with other Australian Government departments, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts is currently developing a practical plan to implement this policy.

This will involve consultation with state and territory government agencies and Indigenous languages organisations to ensure the policy will achieve the outcomes sought.

As part of the broader implementation of the policy, my Department will examine the proposal for a National Indigenous Languages Centre.

You should also note that the Australian Government is pursuing the idea of a national Indigenous Cultural Education and Knowledge Centre arising from the Australia 2020 Summit.

As a first step, a feasibility study will be undertaken to develop possible models and options for such a centre, for consideration by Government.

The Australian Government currently supports extensive maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages through the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records Program which is providing \$9.3 million in 2009-10 to some 65 projects nationally, involving around 200 languages.

The policy can be found at: www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages_policy.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Peter Garrett