



## **Parliamentary Committee inquiring into Indigenous languages in Sydney**

Indigenous languages policy and programs will be the focus of a public hearing in Sydney on Friday, 18 November 2011 in relation to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities. The Committee will hear a wide range of evidence from advocacy organisations, NSW government departments and from people who are working with communities to teach, maintain or revitalise Indigenous languages.

The Australian Human Rights Commission and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) will provide evidence to the Committee on the benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages. Given that "the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is intrinsically connected with the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples", ANTaR are deeply concerned that "Indigenous languages continue to disappear in Australia at one of the fastest rates in the world."

Representatives of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning will speak to the Committee about the "strong role language plays in the cultural empowerment of Indigenous people across Australia and future generations." The Australian Council of TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Associations will present to the Committee its position that the "specific English language and literacy learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must be acknowledged and addressed in educational programs and initiatives." John Hobson from the University of Sydney's Koori Centre will give evidence about the importance of teacher training for improving education outcomes in communities where English is not the first language. Mr Hobson believes that "if there is a genuine interest in fostering better education, literacy and numeracy for remote area Indigenous children, the restoration and substantial expansion of bilingual education is urgently needed."

The Committee will hear from Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the NSW Department of Education and Communities, and the NSW Board of Studies about the work that is currently being conducted under the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy. Representatives of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group will speak to the Committee about the group's role as the principal advisory body on Aboriginal education in NSW. The Committee will also hear from the Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions (CITIES) about its work developing resources for Aboriginal knowledge sharing and engagement with information and communication technology, particularly in relation to language reclamation.

Committee Chair Mr Shayne Neumann MP commented that "the Committee is really interested in hearing about successful programs that are supporting Indigenous languages while at the same time improving well-being and educational outcomes in Indigenous communities."

**Program: Friday 18 November 2011, 9:15am-3:30pm**

**Venue: Jubilee Room, NSW State Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney**

The hearing will be audio broadcast live from the venue from 9:15 am via:

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/> Information about the inquiry including the program can be found at the inquiry's website: [www.aph.gov.au/languages](http://www.aph.gov.au/languages)

**For media comment**, please contact the Committee Chair Mr Shayne Neumann on (07) 3201 5300.

**For background information**, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 62774559 or [atsia.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:atsia.reps@aph.gov.au)