The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Our Land
Our Languages

Language Learning in Indigenous Communities

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Contents

REPORT

Foreword

Language work is close to the heart of many Indigenous Australians. The important role that Indigenous languages play in terms of a connection to culture, kinship, land and family was highlighted during the Committee's inquiry, as was the devastation to communities that results when language is lost. Indigenous languages are the foundation upon which the capacity to learn, interact and to shape identity is built.

The dedication and passion of people involved in Indigenous languages projects in urban, regional and remote locations was impressive. The Committee found there is outstanding work being undertaken across the country to maintain and revive Indigenous languages, for example:

- the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre has developed the Miromaa computer program, a database that enables the gathering, organising, analysis and production of language materials to aid in language education and training

- the Papulu Appar-kari Language Corporation, based in Tenant Creek, supports 16 language groups in the Barkley Region through a range of activities and resources

- the Mabu Yawaru Ngan-ga language centre supports the teaching of the Yawaru language in schools in the Broome area

- the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre runs a master-apprentice scheme for the learning of the Mirrawoong language in the Kununurra region

- the Gidarjil Corporation is producing booklets and teaching Dharambal language and culture to children in schools across central Queensland, and

- the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre has developed dictionaries for about seven Indigenous languages in New South Wales.

The Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia in 1992 recognised the occupancy of the Indigenous peoples and their ongoing connection to the land. This report builds on this connection to land and recognises and celebrates the

languages of Australia's Indigenous peoples who have lived in this land for over tens of thousands of years.

The Committee has made 30 recommendations in this report in key areas such as:

- incorporating an acknowledgement and focus of Indigenous languages into the Closing the Gap framework

- expanding the Indigenous Languages Support program and prioritising the development of language nests

- establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service and putting in place immediate measures to ensure competent interpreting services in the health and justice sectors

- supporting Constitutional change to include the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

- resourcing bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities where the child's first language is an Indigenous language

- developing strategies for training Indigenous language teachers to ensure improved access to full qualifications, accreditation and career pathways

- compulsory English as an Additional Language or Dialect training for all teaching degrees and mandatory EAL/D and cultural awareness training for teacher working in Indigenous communities, and

- improving community access to language materials through a dedicated Indigenous languages archive at AIATSIS and the sharing of resources with schools and educational institutions.

The Committee received over 154 submissions and held 23 public hearings. I would like to express my thanks to those people who put much time into their excellent contributions to submissions and during hearings.

I take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Chair, Sharman Stone MP and all the members of the Committee for their work during the inquiry.

To all Australians I say: take pride in the Indigenous languages of our nation. Indigenous languages bring with them rich cultural heritage, knowledge and a spiritual connection to the land – *Our Land, Our Languages*.

Mr Shayne Neumann
Chair

Membership of the Committee

Chair	Mr Shayne Neumann MP
Deputy Chair	The Hon. Dr Sharman Stone MP
Members	Ms Sharon Grierson MP
	Mrs Natasha Griggs MP
	Mr Barry Haase MP
	Mr Ed Husic MP
	Mr Graham Perrett MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Dr Anna Dacre
Inquiry Secretary	Ms Susan Cardell Ms Rebecca Gordon
Research Officers	Dr John White
Administrative Officers	Mrs Rebeka Mills

Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on Indigenous languages in Australia, with a particular focus on:

- The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages

- The contribution of Indigenous languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture

- The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education

- Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second Language

- The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities

- Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services

- The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages

- The effectiveness of the Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy in delivering its objectives and relevant policies of other Australian governments.

List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACIKE	Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AEU	Australian Education Union
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
AHED	Arnhem Human Enterprise Development
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIICS	Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School
AISSA	Association of Independent Schools South Australia
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ALNF	Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation
ALRRC	Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre
ANTaR	Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
ARDS	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSILS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

AuSIL   Australian Society for Indigenous Languages

AVA   Audiovisual Archive

BIITE   Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

CAAMA   The Central Australian Indigenous Media Association

CALCD   Centre for Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development

CDU   Charles Darwin University

CITIES   Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering
            Solutions

COAG   Council of Australian Governments

DEET   Department of Employment, Education and Training

DEEWR   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

DET   Department of Education and Training

DGR   Deductible Gift Recipient

DHS   Department of Human Services

DRIL   Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages

EAL/D   English as an Additional Language or Dialect

ELA   Evaluation of Literacy Approach

ESALG   Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group

ESL   English as a Second Language

FaHCSIA   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and
            Indigenous Affairs

FATSILC   Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and
            Culture

HIPPY   Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

IAAC   Indigenous Advisory Affairs Council

ICTV	Indigenous Community Television
IEOs	Indigenous Engagement Officers
IRCA	Indigenous Remote Communications Association
ILS	Indigenous Languages Support
KIS	Kimberley Interpreting Services
KLRC	Kimberley Language Resource Centre
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MALCC	Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
MILR	Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records
MRALC	Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre
NAAJA	North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NALP	National Aboriginal Languages Project
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NBN	National Broadband Network
NILS	National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005
NILS2	Second National Indigenous Languages Survey
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
NIRS	National Indigenous Radio Service
NITV	National Indigenous Television
NT AIS	Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service

NTCF	Northern Territory Curriculum Framework
NT NP	Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement
OFTA	Office for the Arts
PBI	Public Benevolent Institution
RATE	Remote Area Teacher Education
RNLD	Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity
ROCO	Register of Cultural Organisations
RSD NP	Remote Service Delivery National Partnership
SACCS	South Australia Commission for Catholic Schools
SAE	Standard Australian English
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SCSEEC	Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood
TAC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
TIS	Translating and Interpreting Service
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WA	Western Australia
VACL	Victorian Aboriginal Centre for Languages
VET	Vocational Education and Training

List of recommendations

2 The role of Indigenous languages

Recommendation 1 - Closing the Gap framework

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the Closing the Gap framework acknowledgement of the fundamental role and importance of Indigenous languages in preserving heritage and improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

Recommendation 2 - Signage in Indigenous languages

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government include in the National Indigenous Languages Policy 2009 a commitment to support and progress signage of place names and landmarks in local Indigenous languages.

Recommendation 3 – Parliamentary recognition of Indigenous languages

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Parliament demonstrate leadership in the recognition and valuing of Indigenous languages by:

- considering how to incorporate Indigenous languages in the Parliament House building and in the operations of the Parliament, and

- encouraging all Members of Parliament to:

  ⇒ be aware of and recognise the Indigenous language groups local to their electorate

  ⇒ where, possible and appropriate, acknowledge traditional owners and utilise language names for places and landmarks, and

  ⇒ support schools and community groups in their area to recognise, value and where possible utilise Indigenous language names.

3 Indigenous languages policy

Recommendation 4 - Languages policy action plan

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government review and make publically available by March 2013 an updated action plan with clear goals, accountability and reporting requirements to implement its National Indigenous Languages Policy. The Committee further recommends that relevant Commonwealth Government agencies are required to report annually on outcomes of the action plan.

Recommendation 5 - Increased funding for Indigenous Languages Support

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government substantially increase ongoing funding for the Indigenous Languages Support program in the 2013-14 Budget.

Recommendation 6 - Torres Strait Islander funding eligibility

The Committee recommends that the Minister for the Arts amend the guidelines for the Indigenous Languages Support program to allow Torres Strait Islander applications to be considered for funding.

Recommendation 7 - Deductible Gift Recipient eligibility

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government immediately amend the criteria for an organisation to be entered on the Register of Cultural Organisations to include a provision for Indigenous language-related projects to be endorsed as a Deductable Gift Recipient by the Australian Taxation Office.

Recommendation 8 - Constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government support Constitutional changes to include the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, as recommended by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Australians.

Recommendation 9 - United Nations declaration implementation plan

The Committee recommends that by March 2013 the Commonwealth Government develop and announce an implementation plan given its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2009.

Recommendation 10 - Convention ratification review

The Committee recommends that, given Australia has not yet ratified the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Commonwealth Government conduct a review of the potential benefits and implications of its ratification.

4   Learning Indigenous languages and Standard Australian English

Recommendation 11 - Indigenous language learning in school

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government coordinate with the states and territories to announce dates for the implementation of Phase 2 of the Australian Curriculum.

Recommendation 12 – Language Nests

The Committee recommends that the Office for the Arts, through the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program, prioritise funding for Language Nest programs throughout Australia.

The Committee further recommends that the Commonwealth Government give consideration to establishing Language Nest programs in early childhood learning centres and preschools as set up under National Partnership Agreements.

Recommendation 13 - First language assessment

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop protocols for mandatory first-language assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering early childhood education.

Recommendation 14 – Bilingual education programs

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments to provide adequately resourced bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities from the earliest years of learning, where the child's first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact).

Recommendation 15 – NAPLAN alternative assessment tool

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) alternative assessment tool for all students learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect.

5   Teaching Indigenous languages

Recommendation 16 - Limited authority to teach

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and teacher training authorities to develop a national framework of flexible and accessible training for Indigenous people to gain limited authority qualifications to teach.

Recommendation 17 - Indigenous language teacher training

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop incentives for teacher training institutions to offer Indigenous language teacher training, such as a limited authority qualification to teach.

Recommendation 18 - Indigenous language teachers - training and career pathways

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop strategies for training Indigenous language teachers to improve access to qualifications, full accreditation and career pathways as well as providing school support and mentorship where required.

Recommendation 19 – Master-apprentice schemes

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to give consideration to establishing master-apprentice schemes in schools to provide in-service support for Indigenous language teachers.

Recommendation 20 - Sharing language teaching resources

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government amend the Indigenous Language Support (ILS) program funding criteria to ensure that language materials produced with ILS program support should, where practical and culturally appropriate, be available to be shared with schools and educational institutions as a teaching resource, with proper acknowledgment of its creators.

Recommendation 21 - Compulsory EAL/D training for teaching degrees

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal to include a compulsory component of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) training for all teaching degrees.

Recommendation 22 – In-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal that all teachers already working in schools in Indigenous communities be required to complete in-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training as part of mandatory professional development.

6   Interpreting and translating Indigenous languages

Recommendation 23 - Protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs expedite the release of a protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services for all Commonwealth Government agencies.

The Committee further recommends that the Commonwealth Government raise at Council of Australian Governments (COAG) the need for all states and territories to have similar protocols and ensure the use of competent interpreters when required.

Recommendation 24 - National Indigenous Interpreter Service

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the states and territories, establish a national Indigenous interpreter service that is suitably resourced to service urban, regional and remote Australia.

Recommendation 25 –Interpreting in health and justice sectors

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government put in place immediate measures to ensure access to Indigenous interpreting services in the health and justice sectors, while a competent and comprehensive interpreting service is being developed.

Recommendation 26 - Interpreter training

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, as part of developing the national framework for the effective supply and use of competent Indigenous language interpreters and translators, allocate resourcing to provide Indigenous interpreters with accessible training to achieve paraprofessional and professional levels.

Recommendation 27 - Accreditation funding

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the state and territory governments, ensure dedicated and ongoing funding to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) for Indigenous language interpreter accreditation to paraprofessional and professional level.

7   Preserving languages for future generations

Recommendation 28 – Dedicated Indigenous language archive

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the 2013-14 Budget increased resources for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to carry out the storage and digitisation of Indigenous language materials.

Recommendation 29 – AIATSIS research funding

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government consult with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in order for it to recommence its research grants program in the 2013-14 Budget.

Recommendation 30 – Archiving of ILS language material

The Committee recommends that the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program funding guidelines be amended to include a stipulation that a copy of any language materials developed by ILS funding recipients must be deposited with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Library or Audio-Visual Archive.