

Language is intertwined with culture, land, and identity; it is how knowledge is transferred, how culture is learned and shapes the concepts and understandings we have of the world. Sadly, around the globe there are 2.3 billion people who lack access to education in their mother language, putting thousands of languages and cultures at risk of being lost. In Australia 90% of Indigenous languages are critically endangered.

2022-2032 is the Decade of Indigenous Languages

From 2022 to 2032 we are in the **Decade of Indigenous Languages**. The intention of this decade is to ensure the rights of Indigenous Peoples in preserving their languages, cultures, and identities. It aims to start a global conversation and offers the opportunity for sharing strategies in policy development to aid languages around the world.



February 21st is the United Nations International Mother Language Day!

International Mother Language Day is observed each year to acknowledge and promote the importance of language to cultures and societies around the world. Through encouraging multi-lingual societies, the United Nations aims to foster the revitalisation and protection of languages to preserve traditional knowledges and cultures.

Why do we need the Decade of Indigenous Languages?

- Every two years a language is lost taking with it an entire culture and knowledge system
- At least 43% of the estimated 6000 languages spoken globally are endangered
- Only a few hundred of these are used in mainstream education and discourse

THEME

The theme of the 2023 International Mother Language Day, “**Multilingual education – a necessity to transform education**”

Indigenous Languages in Australia

Did you know?

- This continent was made up of more than 780 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
- These languages are grouped into 250 language families
- The onset of colonisation put these languages at severe risk
- Today, due to harmful Western policies, 90% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are critically endangered

What can you do?

It is important for everyone to understand how critical all Indigenous languages are to our society. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are the oldest living cultures on earth and with that comes complicated knowledge systems that have enabled prosperity for tens of thousands of years.

Learning Resources

- Read the [National Indigenous Languages Report](#).
- Interact with the [50 words project](#)
- Study the [Gambay – First Languages Map](#)

For more information visit:

[Aboriginal Languages Trust](#), [First Languages Australia](#), [United Nations: International Mother Language Day](#)

In NSW

There are over **100 Aboriginal dialects** that belong to around **35 language groups**. To help grow and preserve these rich languages and cultures, the NSW government has committed to a new syllabus that implements Aboriginal languages from kindergarten to year 10. Schools will receive support to best implement language with Aboriginal communities and knowledge holders.

NSW Legislation

On October 24, 2017, the *NSW Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* became law. The legislation was a response to the critical situation of Aboriginal languages which are at high risk of being lost, taking with them cultures, knowledges, and identity. Under the act, the *Aboriginal Languages Trust* was established to manage the priorities of language activities in a coordinated and sustainable manner.



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