# Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Action Plan

## Background and context

The Queensland Government is committed to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to reconcile the past and achieve a reframed relationship. In July 2019, the Premier signed the historic joint Statement of Commitment as part of the *Tracks to Treaty – Reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* Queenslanders initiative.

To build on this significant step forward in the reconciliation journey and to foster a shared pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, on 2 September 2020, the Premier launched the *Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy*.

The Queensland Government worked in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language experts to co-design and develop the Languages Policy. This delivered on the action in the Queensland Government *Reconciliation Action Plan 2018-2021* for a co-designed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages policy with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The Languages Policy outlines the Queensland Government commitment to:

* recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in maintaining cultural identities and building the resilience of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
* working in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop measures to strengthen and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
* promoting Queensland as a thriving, vibrant cultural state that values and embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages as important to everyone.

## About the Action Plan

The *Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Action Plan* (the Action Plan) has been developed to support the implementation if the Languages Policy. It outlines actions that build on existing initiatives underway across government, encourages whole-of-government support and embeds respect and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the everyday business of Queensland Government.

The Action Plan aligns with the United Nations Decade for Indigenous Languages 2022-21 which commits to drawing attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalise and promote Indigenous languages. The Action Plan, and all subsequent plans, will be underpinned by the guiding principles of self-determination, recognition of diversity, truth telling and healing, and urgency and action.

It outlines key areas for government action across four priority areas to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland are strong, acknowledged, maintained and accessible. These include:

1. **PATHWAYS:** strategies aimed at developing physical, cultural and social infrastructure that provides strong foundations to support language growth and maintenance.
2. **ACTION AND ACTIVATION:** development of language resources and expertise to grow community capacity to share and encourage the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages across all Queensland communities.
3. **RESTORATION AND TRANSMISSION:** strategies to increase the number of people speaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages regularly including information storage, expertise and local access to learning.
4. **RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION:** strategies to grow community awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to encourage reconciliation and pride in Queensland’s unique cultural heritage.

## Closing the Gap

Importantly, the *Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Action Plan* will contribute to the Queensland Government’s commitment to the four priority reforms areas in the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap and to target 16 which commits to a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages being spoken by 2031.

This will be achieved through the delivery of initiatives that will help preserve, grow and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary languages in Queensland. Culture and language play a critical role in the healing and strengthening of individuals and communities. Research demonstrates that cultural participation, including language use, supports improved life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including:

* early childhood development by promoting resilience, and by supporting engagement in early childhood services and education
* schooling by supporting self-esteem, attendance and academic performance through improved literacy and numeracy skills
* health by promoting physical and mental health and wellbeing
* economic participation through employment
* safe communities through developing stronger cultural identity and increasing resilience as protective factors against critical issues such as suicide and racism
* culturally legitimate governance and leadership.

Implementation of the Languages Policy and Action Plan including its progress in achieving Target 16 of the National Agreement will be monitored by the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, guided by the Closing the Gap Partnership Committee.

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| Colourful Indigenous inspired graphic button to represent priority one: pathways | PATHWAYS Investigate strategies aimed at developing physical, cultural and social infrastructure that provides strong foundations to support language growth and maintenance. | |
| * 1. Investigate the creation of training packages to support the professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school-based language educators. | | DoE |
| * 1. Pilot the delivery of certificate courses and professional development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school-based language educators. | | DoE |
| * 1. Engage with local community groups to promote certification opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are First Nations Language experts. | | DESBT  DSDSATSIP |
| * 1. Development of Family Led Decision-Making to increase the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in the youth justice system with the following Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations: Kurbingui, Wuchopperan, Goolburri and ATSICHS. | | DCYJMA |
| * 1. Stronger Places, Stronger People collective impact initiatives in Logan, Gladstone and Rockhampton continue to support communities to address local issues, including cultural issues and cultural identity. | | DCHDE |
| * 1. Continue to create economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists through cultural expression such as the promotion of traditional language and story sharing through the Backing Indigenous Regional Art initiative. | | DCHDE (AQ) |
| * 1. Continue ongoing management of state-wide whole-of-government language services Standing Offer Arrangement including interpreting and translation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages | | QH |
| * 1. Through the Indigenous Languages Grants Program, initiate, develop and establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language maintenance and revival through a range of activities across Queensland. | | DSDSATSIP  DoE |

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| Colourful Indigenous inspired graphic button to represent priority two: action and activation | ACTION AND ACTIVATION Investigate development of language resources and expertise to grow community capacity to share and encourage the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages across all Queensland communities. | |
| * 1. Continue the employment and contracting of accredited Magistrate Court interpreters, such as the Wik Mungkan interpreters at the Aurukun Magistrates Court. | | DJAG |
| * 1. Continue to provide funding to the Aurukun Community Indigenous Corporation as part of the Aurukun Restorative Justice Program to Thaa’ Pant to deliver peacekeeping and meditation services, including meditations conducted in Wik Mungkan language. | | DJAG |
| * 1. Increase the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages in and across all aspects of cultural tourism. | | DTIS |
| * 1. Support the Murridhagun Cultural Centre to provide cultural support, including language speakers, and advice to Queensland Corrective Services staff to support the relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners have with their cultural identity. | | QCS |
| * 1. Implement the Australian Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages in Queensland State Schools. | | DoE |
| * 1. Optimise the translation of Bushfire Awareness and Preparedness materials into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages state-wide. | | QFES |

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| Colourful Indigenous inspired graphic button to represent priority three: restoration and transmission | RESTORATION AND TRANSMISSION Investigate strategies to increase the number of people speaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages regularly including information storage, expertise and local access to learning. | |
| * 1. Explore the viability of small grant funding for artists to provide community-based art activities that promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages | | DCHDE (AQ) DSDSATSIP |
| * 1. Provide community access to the recording facilities at the Bulmba-ja Arts Centre (Cairns) to preserve, maintain and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages | | DCHDE (AQ) |
| * 1. Embed active efforts to implement and give full effect to all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across the five system elements of the family support system (legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice). In particular, the Connection principle reinforces a child’s right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child’s family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly when the child is in the care of a person who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person | | DCYJMA |
| * 1. Provide tools and professional development to public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres so they can support communities to record and document languages | | DCHDE(SLQ) |
| * 1. Support Queensland state schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to work together to increase the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language through use in the classroom | | DoE |
| * 1. Provide guidance on the Copyright and Intellectual Property rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language speakers to protect the cultural property created during the development of teaching materials in schools. | | DoE |

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| Colourful Indigenous inspired graphic button to represent priority four: recognition and promotion | RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION Investigate strategies to grow community awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to encourage reconciliation and pride in Queensland’s unique cultural heritage. | |
| * 1. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enable them to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is a language or dialect other than English | | DoE |
| * 1. Explore strategies for the recognition and promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages through place names | | DoR |
| * 1. Explore the impact of history on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ languages as part of truth telling and healing and the Path to Treaty | | DSDSATSIP |
| * 1. Provide early childhood education and care services with information on including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language in their early childhood programs, through capability development, newsletters and websites such as Foundations for Success | | DoE |
| * 1. Work in partnership across government to support and promote the value of recognising, reinvigorating and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures including traditional languages. | | DSDSATSIP |
| * 1. Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language is incorporated into work across the Queensland Government as part of Acknowledgement of Country. | | DSDSATSIP |
| * 1. Explore strategies to support all schools to recognise and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country and languages of their school location on signage and school websites | | DoE |
| * 1. Continue to the use the ‘Look to the Stars’ artwork to encourage conversations, across all languages, and work towards reconciliation, understanding and respect | | QPS |
| * 1. Support and guide non-Indigenous organisations/operators to engage and promote traditional languages in a respectful way by linking with Traditional Owners and key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language stakeholders | | DSDSATSIP |
| * 1. Develop a ‘Culturally Respectful Language Guide’ to inform the Department of the Premier and Cabinet’s internal and external documents and communications | | DPC |
| * 1. Increase the naming of shared meeting spaces in 1 William Street using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to grow awareness and understanding | | DSDSATSIP  DPC |
| * 1. Areas within Queensland Corrective Service facilities continue to acknowledge Traditional language through the naming of areas | | QCS |
| * 1. Increase the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and build stronger relationships with First Nations peoples through the implementation of a National Parks First Nations Naming Project sprint | | DES |
| * 1. Encourage the revitalisation of language in alignment with the Gurra Gurra Framework 2020-2026 through appropriate and authorised use of language | | DES |
| * 1. Continue the use of Indigenous interpretive signage and physical activities across Queensland Recreation Centres to promote awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and culture | | DTIS |
| * 1. Increase the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and build stronger relationships with First Nations peoples through the implementation of the Transport and Main Roads Infrastructure Naming Policy | | DTMR |

# GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

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| Department name | Abbreviation |
| Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy | DCHDE |
| Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs | DCYJMA |
| Department of Employment, Small Business and Training | DESBT |
| Department of Environment and Science | DES |
| Department of Justice and Attorney-General | DJAG |
| Department of Education | DoE |
| Department of the Premier and Cabinet | DPC |
| Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships | DSDSATSIP |
| Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport | DTIS |
| Department of Transport and Main Roads | DTMR |
| Queensland Corrective Services | QCS |
| Queensland Fire and Emergency Services | QFES |
| Queensland Health | QH |
| Queensland Police Service | QPS |
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# Acknowledgement

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors—our First Australians—give strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, towards creating a better Queensland.

We recognise it is our collective efforts and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.

On behalf of the Queensland Government, we offer a genuine commitment to fearlessly represent, advocate for and promote the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with unwavering determination, passion and persistence.

As we reflect on the past and give hope for the future, we walk together on our shared journey to reconciliation where all Queenslanders are equal.

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