

TO THE HONORABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

This petition of citizens from Australia and overseas draws the attention of the House to the announcement on October 14th 2008 by the NT Government that from 2009 the ten remaining bilingual programs in the Northern Territory would be effectively closed down.

We believe that

- The NT Government's decision is educationally unsound, and will hinder the children's chances of learning good English. It goes against the strong evidence that using a child's first language fosters greater cognitive development and proficiency in learning through all curriculum areas.
- The decision is demoralising for Indigenous communities who have put over thirty years into promoting and developing teaching methodologies that suit bilingual and bicultural Indigenous children.
- The decision will prejudice the survival of Indigenous languages. The use of the child's first language also fosters pride in the students' self esteem and Indigenous identity as recognised in the "Little Children are Sacred" Report.
- The decision goes against the recognition by the United Nations of the right of Indigenous people to provide education in their own languages.

We therefore ask the House to:

Ratify the *UN Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and in particular to direct the NT Government to comply with Article 14 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Article 14.1:
Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.