

**TO THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER,
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

This petition of citizens from Australia and overseas both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous draws to the attention of the House that we are alarmed at the rate of unchecked language loss in Australia. Over 250 vigorous and vibrant languages on record at the time of European arrival in Australia have been reduced to just 17 which are being transmitted naturally to younger members of their communities. Some other languages are still spoken fluently but the vast majority are in varying states of decline and disrepair. There are also vigorous efforts across the country to maintain and revive languages, in some cases to re-introduce them after many decades of non-use.

In the debate and activity addressing indigenous disadvantage indigenous languages have been overlooked. Language should be seen as a pathway to education, to healthier and wealthier communities, not as a separate subordinate issue.

We therefore ask the House to develop a National Indigenous Languages Policy and a National Indigenous Languages Institute in order to strategically and coherently support the:

- Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (including creoles and Aboriginal Englishes)
- Documentation and development of Indigenous Languages
- Development of programs at all levels of Education
- Development of numeracy and literacy targets in Indigenous Languages
- Provision of interpreting and translation services (and training interpreters)
- Expansion of employment options that recognise and utilise language knowledge and skills
- Development of measures to increase the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the public domain (including music industry, TV, radio, press, public art and signage).