



Parliamentary Committee to hear from Indigenous languages educator

Canberra Public Hearing 12:15pm
Thursday 13 October

The Coordinator of Indigenous Languages Education at the University of Sydney's Koori Centre, John Hobson, will give evidence to a parliamentary Committee inquiring into language learning in Indigenous communities. Mr Hobson will share with the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs his experience of working with Indigenous languages and language learners over the past 25 years.

In the Koori Centre's submission to the inquiry, Mr Hobson says that "the benefits of giving attention to and recognising Indigenous Australian languages" are "axiomatic and parallel to the benefits of giving attention and recognition to Australian English". Mr Hobson is critical of the record of government education for remote area Indigenous Australian children, stating that "if the Government wishes to use education to close the gap it should act to ensure high quality mother tongue education is provided to those children who enter with English as a second language."

Mr Hobson said that "If children receive a good primary education in a language they understand, they will acquire literacy and numeracy and an understanding of school processes that will allow them to subsequently acquire English as a second language sufficient to function satisfactorily in the world they occupy".

The Committee's inquiry is interested in the links between Indigenous languages and improving education, community wellbeing, interpreting services and strategies to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The Committee aims to find out about how the use of Indigenous languages can assist in improving education and vocational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As part of the terms of reference the Indigenous languages policies of Australian governments, and the benefits and effectiveness of Indigenous language maintenance and revitalisation programs are being investigated.

The hearing will be broadcast live from Committee Room 1R2, Parliament House, Canberra from approximately 12:15pm on Thursday 13 October:

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Information about the inquiry can be found at the inquiry's website:

www.aph.gov.au/languages

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair Mr Shayne Neumann on (07) 3201 5300.

For background information, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 62774559 or atsia.reps@aph.gov.au