The rich and diverse Aboriginal languages of NSW are an important part of this State’s cultural heritage and identity. However, they are all considered to be critically endangered.

Since 1998, Aboriginal Affairs has supported revival of Aboriginal languages through funding and policy coordination.

OCHRE aims to improve Aboriginal people’s social, cultural and economic wellbeing. Aboriginal languages are a fundamental part of Aboriginal culture and are important to Aboriginal identity and wellbeing.

Aboriginal communities, supported by the NSW Government, are actively working to revive and maintain their languages. OCHRE outlines a number of initiatives to increase opportunities to learn Aboriginal languages in communities, schools and for greater appreciation of Aboriginal languages within the broader community.

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are local community networks which work collectively on Aboriginal language revival and maintenance, and creating learning pathways for Aboriginal students. Aboriginal communities direct the operations of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests and their language knowledge is recognised and respected. Each Nest also has a Keeping Place to manage its language resources.

The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest initiative is being led jointly by the Department of Education and the NSW Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group Inc.

The NSW Government has established five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests across NSW, as part of OCHRE:

- North West Wiradjuri (Dubbo);
- Gumbaynggirr (Coffs Harbour);
- Bundjalung (Lismore);
- Paakantji (Wilcannia); and
- Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay (Lightning Ridge)

There are now 60 schools engaged in Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, with over 5,100 students learning an Aboriginal language.

Other schools also have Aboriginal languages programs supported by the NSW Aboriginal Education Policy and curriculum materials developed by the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards. From 2016, Stage 6 High School students are able to study Aboriginal languages as part of their Higher School Certificate. For more information go to http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/aboriginaleducation/index.php

How is Aboriginal Affairs supporting Aboriginal language revival?

The ‘Our Languages, Our Way’ Community Language Grants fund Aboriginal community driven projects to strengthen community ownership and participation in language revival projects in NSW.

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