

What is happening with our languages?

The NSW Government understands Aboriginal languages are too important to lose. The government is working with Aboriginal communities in NSW to protect and strengthen Aboriginal languages. To make sure this succeeds the government is introducing new legislation. This is a new set of legal rules that mean the government must act to look after Aboriginal languages not only for today's communities but for future generations.

Why does Language matter?

Our Aboriginal languages are both precious and unique. Language tells us who we are. It gives us pride in our culture and identify and self-respect. It stores our knowledge, stories and songs. Almost all of NSW Aboriginal languages are at risk of permanent loss. The government is very proud that NSW is the first Australian state to officially recognise the importance of Aboriginal languages and to commit to protecting them for the future.

How can new legislation make a difference?

Legislation is much more than a promise. It is a set of legal rules. This means the NSW government and the many other organisations the government oversees, like our public schools and health services, must respect and follow the plan promoting and nurturing Aboriginal Languages. The new Aboriginal languages legislation will set out what needs to be done and how it will be done and will make sure today's government, and future governments, provide the necessary funds and support.

How can I have a say?

Your views are very important. The Aboriginal languages legislation is for Aboriginal communities and for everyone in NSW, so communities must have the chance to have their say. Aboriginal Affairs will be holding regional workshops to listen to your opinions and ideas between May and June 2017. These meeting will be open to everyone. Details will be advertised on the Aboriginal Affairs website, in the Koori Mail and in regional press closer to the date.

What difference will communities' opinions make?

The NSW government has developed draft legislation. But, by listening to the Aboriginal people who matter most we can learn about what language means to communities and understand their hopes for their future. The NSW Government's role is to support the revival of Aboriginal language. It is the communities who understand, own and control their languages.

What is planned for the Aboriginal Languages Legislation?

There are three parts:

1. Acknowledgement statements;
2. A five-year Strategic Plan; and
3. A Centre for Aboriginal Languages of NSW.

1. What will the Acknowledgement statements say?

These statements recognise:

- that language is intrinsic to the culture and identity of Aboriginal people and to the intangible cultural heritage of all people of New South Wales;
- the rights of Aboriginal people and communities to learn and maintain Aboriginal languages;
- the role of the New South Wales Government in recognising, protecting and reviving Aboriginal languages; and
- the need to take action to revive and protect Aboriginal languages, to prevent the further loss of Aboriginal languages, and to ensure the survival of Aboriginal languages.

2. What will the Strategic Plan cover?

To protect and strengthen Aboriginal languages we will need programs, partnerships and funding for the coming five years. These will be decided on and set out in the five-year Strategic Plan, but only after listening to Aboriginal communities. The plan will also give details of the teaching and sharing of Aboriginal

languages. To make sure the plan is on track, NSW Government agencies will report to the NSW Parliament every year. Some areas that may be included in the Strategic Plan include:

- Upholding Aboriginal Community Ownership and Control – such as building community capability to control revival and teaching of Aboriginal languages;
- Nurturing Aboriginal Languages – such as supporting effective language revival activities;
- Improving Wellbeing and Education – such as language teaching in schools and higher education, and language use in human service and justice areas;
- Developing an Aboriginal Languages sector – such as a workforce development strategy for the various roles within the Aboriginal languages sector; and
- Wider appreciation and usage – such as placenames, signage, and everyday use of language in business of government.

3. What will the Centre for Aboriginal Languages of NSW do?

The Centre's job will be to bring back Aboriginal languages by putting in place the activities set out in the Strategic Plan. This is a big job and will be done in partnership with Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, regional language centres, schools, universities and government agencies. The Centre for Aboriginal Languages will be supported by a business unit of Aboriginal Affairs. To make sure the Centre works well, it will continue to listen to Aboriginal communities and respond to the lessons learned from regular reviews of Aboriginal languages programs.

Will the Aboriginal Languages Legislation affect Indigenous sovereignty?

No. The legislation does not affect Aboriginal ownership or sovereign rights to language. After talking with communities, the legislation may support greater Aboriginal control of

Aboriginal language revival and education.

How does this fit in with our Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests?

Five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests were created under OCHRE. The Aboriginal Languages Legislation will support and enhance the work of Nests. But, evaluation of the Nests is a separate part of the continuing conversation between Aboriginal Affairs and communities.

How does this fit in with Aboriginal Cultural Heritage discussions?

Consultations with communities about the Aboriginal Languages Legislation are only about language. Other consultations may also take place in 2017 through the Office of Environment and Heritage. These separate Aboriginal Cultural Heritage discussions will be about creating a respectful and workable model for Aboriginal cultural heritage protection, including places and objects.

What happens after the Aboriginal Languages Legislation consultations?

Aboriginal Affairs will look closely at all submissions and community feedback from the regional workshops so that the communities' views, ideas and opinions are included in the final design of the legislation, the Strategic Plan and Centre for Aboriginal Languages. After getting Cabinet approval, the final legislation will go to the NSW Parliament in early 2018 for voting into law.

More information

Further information is available at www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au.

You can contact the Languages Team at Aboriginal Affairs by calling 1800 019 998 or by emailing conversation@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au.