



Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Indigenous Languages

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.10 am): Today, 1 September, marks Indigenous Literacy Day, a day on which we celebrate stories and languages. The Palaszczuk government is committed to reviving, preserving and promoting First Nations languages in Queensland. This is because we know that First Nations languages are a big part of developing a strong and positive cultural identity, a sense of pride, place, being and belonging; and Indigenous children who learn to read in their first languages also often achieve better English literacy learning outcomes.

As we acknowledge at the opening of parliament each day, Queensland is home to two of the oldest living cultures in the world and with that comes more than 150 traditional languages. Sadly, many of these languages are endangered, with only 50 of them remaining today. Fewer than 20, predominantly in the north of the state and in the Torres Strait, are used as first languages.

Languages are endangered when they are at risk of falling out of use. If a language loses all of its native speakers, it becomes an extinct language. With so many of our state's traditional languages at risk, this highlights the importance of ensuring the survival of some of our state's most precious, but also most vulnerable, cultural heritage.

As part of our commitment to reframe the relationship and address the impacts our colonial history has had on Indigenous languages, we are today launching the next round of the Indigenous Languages Grants. These grants are just one of our initiatives to protect Indigenous languages under the Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy.

This year, the Queensland government is making a record investment of \$400,000 for the 2021 Indigenous Languages Grants. These grants will help more Queenslanders connect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and support First Nations peoples keep their connection to culture, through their languages, strong. Applications are now open for grants of up to \$20,000 to support local communities to celebrate, promote and revive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Applications will close at 3 pm on Friday, 15 October. I encourage Queenslanders to find out more at www.qld.gov.au/ilg.

These grants, co-funded by my department and the Department of Education, have supported more than 50 language initiatives since 2019. Murgon State School and Mountain Creek State High School parents and citizens associations are amongst the grant recipients from the 2020 round of grants. Both are making fantastic progress on their respective projects in partnership with local elders and traditional language speakers.

At Murgon State School work is underway on a community yarning circle, including a mural by students and local artists the Langton family, to celebrate traditional Wakka Wakka language and stories. Mountain Creek State High School is collaborating with local Gubbi Gubbi representatives James and Jo Doyle to create a garden with totems showcasing the school values in traditional language.

In Cape York, Pama Languages received funding to preserve the Guugu Yimithirr language for generations to come. It is worth noting that the Guugu Yimithirr language, one of the few surviving languages still spoken today, was the first language to be recorded on the Australian continent in 1770. Our first Aboriginal state member in this House, Eric Deeral, was a Guugu Yimithirr man, a language speaker and a storyteller. I wonder if Eric would have had an opportunity to speak in his mother tongue during his time in this House.

Ahead of the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032, the Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting grassroots organisations and community-led initiatives to bring to life Indigenous languages in Queensland. Our investment aligns with the national Closing the Gap target for a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken by 2031.

In the current climate of a global pandemic, Indigenous languages are even more important and critical to Queensland's COVID health and economic response. Materials provided in Indigenous languages ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to relevant and culturally appropriate information about the virus, the vaccination rollout and the recovery progress. Celebrating language and culture is also important on Queensland's Path to Treaty, as we acknowledge the impacts of historical practices on First Nations people and work towards a just, fair and inclusive future.