



Queensland Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander Languages Policy  
**Action Plan 2023–2025**

# Background and context

The Queensland Government is committed to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders to reconcile the past and achieve a reframed relationship. In July 2019, the Premier signed the historic joint Statement of Commitment on reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. The key elements enabling this journey include the Path to Treaty, Local Thriving Communities reform and Voice to Government co-design work.

To further build on this significant step forward in the reconciliation journey and to foster a shared pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, on 2 September 2020, the Premier launched the *Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy* (the Languages Policy).

The Queensland Government worked in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language experts to co-design and develop the Languages Policy. This delivered on the action in the *Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2022* for a co-designed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages policy with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The Languages Policy outlines the Queensland Government commitment to:

- recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in maintaining cultural identities and building the resilience of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- working in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop measures to strengthen and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
- promoting Queensland as a thriving, vibrant cultural state that values and embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages as important to everyone.

## About the Second Action Plan

The *Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Action Plan 2023–2025* (the Action Plan 2023–2025) builds on the outcomes of the *Many Voices: Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Action Plan 2020–2022* and details the actions to be taken to meet the priority areas identified in the Languages Policy.

The Action Plan 2023–2025 aligns with the United Nations *International Decade for Indigenous Languages 2022–2032* which commits to drawing attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalise and promote Indigenous languages.

The Action Plan 2023–2025, and all subsequent plans, are underpinned by the guiding principles of self-determination, recognition of diversity, truth telling and healing, and urgency and action.

It outlines key areas for government action across four priority areas (outlined on page 3) to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland are strong, acknowledged, maintained and accessible.

## Closing the Gap

Importantly, the Action Plan 2023–2025 will contribute to the Queensland Government's commitment to the targets and four priority reform areas in the current National Agreement on Closing the Gap including 'target 16' which commits to a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken by 2031.

This will be achieved through the delivery of initiatives that will help preserve, grow and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary languages in Queensland. Culture and language play a critical role in the healing and strengthening of individuals and communities. Research demonstrates that cultural participation, including language use, supports improved life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including:

- early childhood development by promoting resilience, and by supporting engagement in early childhood services and education
- schooling by supporting self-esteem, attendance and academic performance through improved literacy and numeracy skills
- health by promoting physical and mental health and wellbeing
- economic participation through employment
- safe communities through developing stronger cultural identity and increasing resilience as protective factors against critical issues such as suicide and racism
- culturally legitimate governance and leadership.

Implementation of the Action Plan 2023–2025 including its progress in achieving 'target 16' of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap will be monitored by the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, guided by the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition.

The Languages Policy sets four priorities for government action on Indigenous languages and embeds the vision that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland are strong, acknowledged, maintained and accessible to all Queenslanders.

CLICK ON AN ICON BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION



### 1. Pathways

Strategies aimed at developing physical, cultural and social infrastructure that provides strong foundations to support language growth and maintenance.



### 2. Action + activation

Development of language resources and expertise to grow community capacity to share and encourage the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages across all Queensland communities.



### 3. Restoration + transmission

Increase the number of people speaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages regularly including information storage, expertise and local access to learning.



### 4. Recognition + promotion

Strategies to grow community awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to encourage reconciliation and pride in Queensland's unique cultural heritage.

## PRIORITY 01: PATHWAYS



**Pathways** is about building the physical, cultural and social infrastructure foundations to support the growth and maintenance of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland.

Building a solid foundation of support will enable future actions under the Action Plan to be progressed in future iterations of the Action Plan.

New Action	Responsibility
1.1 <b>Explore options to strengthen First Nations Languages Policy</b> to promote Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples language rights, including exploring legislative approaches, community-led governance and funding options in partnership with government stakeholders and First Nations peak representatives.	DTATSIPCA
<b>Ongoing Actions from the 2020–2022 Action Plan</b>	
1.2 <b>Support and guide non-Indigenous organisations/operators</b> to engage and promote traditional languages in a respectful way by linking with Traditional Owners and key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language stakeholders.	DTATSIPCA
1.3 <b>Deliver Family Led Decision-Making</b> to increase the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in the youth justice system with the following Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations: Kurbingui, Wuchopperan, Goolburri and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS).	DYJESBT
1.4 <b>Create economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists</b> through cultural expression such as the promotion of traditional language and story sharing through arts and cultural funding and programs including the Backing Indigenous Art initiative.	DTATSIPCA (AQ)
1.5 <b>Provide ongoing management of statewide whole-of-government language services Standing Offer Arrangement</b> including interpreting and translation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.	QH
1.6 <b>Promote the Murridhagun Cultural Centre</b> as a place of cultural support, including access to language speakers and advice for QCS staff to support the relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners have with their cultural identity.	QCS
1.7 <b>Develop and establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language maintenance and revival</b> through a range of activities across Queensland, through the Indigenous Languages Grants Program.	DoE DTATSIPCA

## PRIORITY 02: ACTION + ACTIVATION



**Action and activation** focuses on sharing and encouraging the development of language expertise and resources to grow capacity.

Nurturing relationships, developing skills, building capacity, and influencing people, agencies, and organisations, to encourage the ongoing development and increased use of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages over time.

New Action	Responsibility
2.1 <b>Conduct and facilitate research of the Queensland State Archives collection</b> to identify languages and language groups, develop community-focused access to language materials, and actively support First Nations knowledge and culture.	DTATSIPCA (QSA)
<b>Ongoing Actions from the 2020–2022 Action Plan</b>	
2.2 <b>Create training packages to support the professional development</b> of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language educators.	DoE
2.3 <b>Pilot the delivery of certificate courses and professional development</b> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language educators.	DoE
2.4 <b>Implement the Australian Curriculum Framework</b> for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages in Queensland State Schools.	DoE
2.5 <b>Continue the contracting of accredited Magistrate Court interpreters</b> , such as the Wik Mungkan interpreters at the Aurukun Magistrates Court.	DJAG
2.6 <b>Continue to provide funding to the Aurukun Community Indigenous Corporation</b> as part of the Aurukun Restorative Justice Program to Thaa' Pant to deliver peacekeeping and meditation services, including meditations conducted in Wik Mungkan language.	DJAG

## PRIORITY 03: RESTORATION + TRANSMISSION



**Restoration and transmission** will focus on strategies that encourage an increase in the number of people regularly speaking Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages, including information storage, expertise and access to learning.

The outcome of this priority is to see an increased number of peoples, speaking, sharing and storing Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages, resulting in an easier transmission of languages in future.

New Action	Responsibility
<p>3.1 <b>Partner with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak</b> to develop a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship care program — Family Caring for Family to maximise the placement of First Nations Children in Out-of-Home Care with family and kin, connected to community and culture to enhance the connection of First Nations children to culture and the maintenance of First Nations languages.</p>	DCSSDS
<b>Ongoing Actions from the 2020–2022 Action Plan</b>	
<p>3.2 <b>Deliver small grant funding for artists</b> to provide community-based art activities that promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.</p>	DTATSIPCA (AQ)
<p>3.3 <b>Promote and support community access</b> to the recording facilities at the Bulmba-ja Arts Centre (Cairns) to preserve, maintain and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.</p>	DTATSIPCA (AQ)
<p>3.4 <b>Embed active efforts</b> to implement and give full effect to all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle across the five system elements of the family support system (legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice). In particular, the Connection principle reinforces a child's right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, community, culture, traditions and language, particularly when the child is in the care of a person who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.</p>	DCSSDS
<p>3.5 <b>Provide tools and professional development</b> to public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres so they can support communities to record and document languages.</p>	DTATSIPCA (SLQ)
<p>3.6 <b>Enable Queensland State Schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to work together</b> to increase the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language through use in the classroom.</p>	DoE
<p>3.7 <b>Promote and provide guidance on the Copyright and Intellectual Property rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language speakers</b> to protect the cultural property created during the development of teaching materials in schools.</p>	DoE

## PRIORITY 04: RECOGNITION + PROMOTION



**Recognition and promotion** seeks to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages at a wider community level.

This will encourage reconciliation and pride in Queensland's unique cultural heritage and embed Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages as an integral part of Queensland's future growth and development.

New Actions	Responsibility
4.1 <b>Promote and share</b> Queensland State Archives language initiatives and opportunities across Queensland community and language networks.	DTATSIPCA (QSA)
4.2 <b>Implement First Nations languages around koalas and their habitats</b> as part of the implementation of the South-East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025.	DES
4.3 <b>Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees</b> to maintain or learn Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages through the DES Connecting to Country Policy.	DES
4.4 <b>Sign new and replacement Fire and Rescue Service Stations and/or composite QFES facilities</b> , and replace signage in existing stations with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place names through engagement with relevant advisory bodies to ensure accurate and respectful signage.	QFES
4.5 <b>Name nine rooms of court buildings and/or court rooms using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language</b> after seeking advice from Traditional Owners and Community Justice Groups.	DJAG
4.6 <b>Magistrates Court buildings to display nine Acknowledgement of Country plaques</b> with the names of Traditional Custodians.	DJAG
4.7 <b>Promote the naming of shared meeting spaces in statewide Department offices</b> using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to grow awareness and understanding.	DTMR

### Ongoing Actions from the 2020–2022 Action Plan

4.8 <b>Promote the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and build stronger relationships with First Nations peoples</b> through the implementation of the Department of Transport and Main Road's Naming of Infrastructure Policy.	DTMR
4.9 <b>Promote the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages</b> in and across all aspects of cultural tourism.	DTIS
4.10 <b>Provide professional development opportunities for teachers</b> to enable them to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is a language or dialect other than English.	DoE

Actions continue to next page



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### Ongoing Actions from the 2020–2022 Action Plan

4.11 <b>Explore strategies for the recognition and promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages through place names.</b>	DoR DTMR
4.12 <b>Explore the impact of history on Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islander peoples' languages</b> and deliver strengths-based actions to promote languages and raise awareness to support truth telling and healing and the Path to Treaty.	DTATSIPCA
4.13 <b>Provide early childhood education and care services</b> with information on including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in their early childhood programs, through capability development, newsletters and websites such as Foundation for Success.	DoE
4.14 <b>Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language is incorporated</b> into work across the Queensland Government as part of Acknowledgement of Country.	DTATSIPCA
4.15 <b>Explore strategies to support all schools to recognise and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country and languages</b> of their school location on signage and school websites.	DoE
4.16 <b>Continue to use the 'Look to the Stars' artwork</b> to encourage conversations, across all languages, and work towards reconciliation, understanding and respect.	QPS
4.17 <b>Increase the naming of shared meeting spaces in 1 William Street</b> using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to grow awareness and understanding.	DPC DTATSIPCA
4.18 <b>Areas within Queensland Corrective Services facilities</b> continue to acknowledge languages of Traditional Owners through the naming of areas.	QCS
4.19 <b>Encourage the revitalisation of language</b> in alignment with the <i>Gurra Gurra Framework 2020–2026</i> through appropriate and authorised use of language.	DES
4.20 <b>Leverage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpretive signs and physical activities across Queensland Recreation Centres</b> to promote awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures.	DTIS



# Glossary of acronyms

Department	Abbreviation
Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services	DCSSDS
Department of Environment and Science	DES
Department of Justice and Attorney-General	DJAG
Department of Education	DoE
Department of the Premier and Cabinet	DPC
Department of Resources	DoR
Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts	DTATSIPCA
Arts Queensland	AQ
State Library of Queensland	SLQ
Queensland State Archives	QSA
Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport	DTIS
Department of Transport and Main Roads	DTMR
Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training	DYJESBT
Queensland Corrective Services	QCS
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services	QFES
Queensland Health	QH
Queensland Police Service	QPS

## Acknowledgement

*We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors—our First Australians—give strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, towards creating a better Queensland.*

*We recognise it is our collective efforts and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.*

*On behalf of the Queensland Government, we offer a genuine commitment to fearlessly represent, advocate for and promote the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with unwavering determination, passion and persistence.*

*As we reflect on the past and give hope for the future, we walk together on our shared journey to reconciliation where all Queenslanders are equal.*

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