



Aboriginal Languages
Trust

The NSW International Decade of Indigenous Languages Strategy 2022-2032



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Aboriginal Languages Trust pay respect to Aboriginal Peoples who are the Custodians of Country.

We acknowledge their unbroken connections to this place through Story, Kinship and Language, from time immemorial.

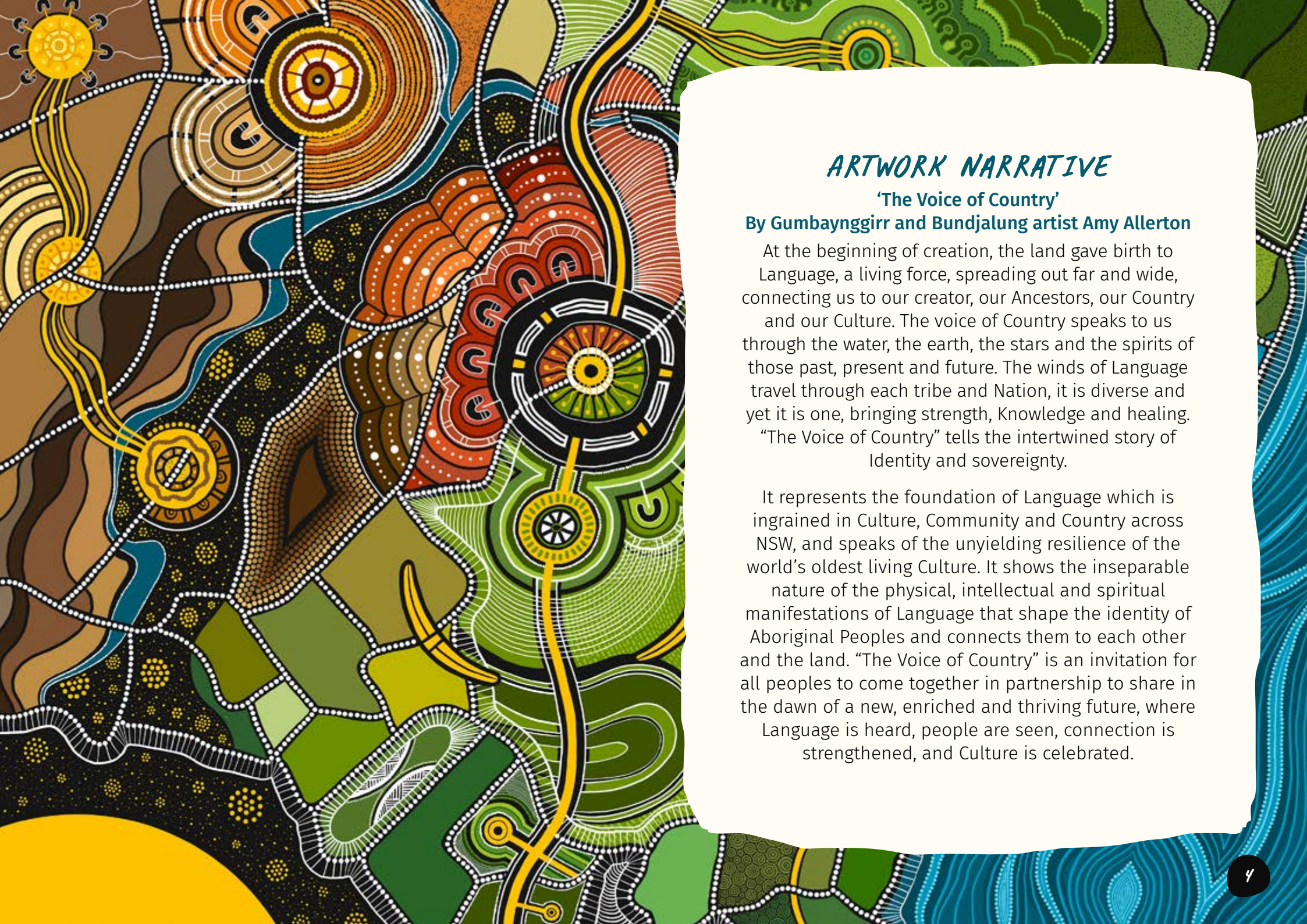
We pay our respect to their Elders past and present, and we acknowledge the leaders of today, those who continue to carry Language, Culture and truth for their People.



CAPITALISATION

The Aboriginal Languages Trust capitalises words that have distinct meaning for Aboriginal People. We do this as a sign of respect and note that it may vary from capitalisation used in Standard Australian English. These words include: Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, Language, Culture, Community, Country, Custodians, Songlines, Lore/Law, Knowledges, Ancestors, Old People, Aboriginal People/s.





ARTWORK NARRATIVE

'The Voice of Country'

By Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung artist Amy Allerton

At the beginning of creation, the land gave birth to Language, a living force, spreading out far and wide, connecting us to our creator, our Ancestors, our Country and our Culture. The voice of Country speaks to us through the water, the earth, the stars and the spirits of those past, present and future. The winds of Language travel through each tribe and Nation, it is diverse and yet it is one, bringing strength, Knowledge and healing. "The Voice of Country" tells the intertwined story of Identity and sovereignty.

It represents the foundation of Language which is ingrained in Culture, Community and Country across NSW, and speaks of the unyielding resilience of the world's oldest living Culture. It shows the inseparable nature of the physical, intellectual and spiritual manifestations of Language that shape the identity of Aboriginal Peoples and connects them to each other and the land. "The Voice of Country" is an invitation for all peoples to come together in partnership to share in the dawn of a new, enriched and thriving future, where Language is heard, people are seen, connection is strengthened, and Culture is celebrated.

Foreword

I am a proud Ngarabal, Nucoorilma, and Biripi woman—born on Dharug Country, raised on Gomeroi Country, and now living and working on Gadigal Country. As A/Executive Director, I have the honour of leading the Trust in delivering a focused, coordinated, and sustained effort to support Aboriginal Languages at local, regional, and state levels.

The Aboriginal Languages Trust is an Aboriginal-led NSW Government agency, established under the NSW Aboriginal Languages Act 2017 to support the growth and nurturing of Aboriginal Languages in NSW. The Trust's work is informed by consultations with hundreds of Aboriginal Community members across NSW. We heard a clear vision — that all NSW Languages would be strong and healthy.

Many communities are working tirelessly to revitalise and strengthen their languages. In NSW, Aboriginal People have told us that urgent support is needed: more language centres, better access to Country, enhanced technology, trained language teachers, and community-led education programs. These needs inform all that we do and are reflected in our Five-Year Strategic Plan and Multi-Year Research Agenda.

The International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032 places a global spotlight on Indigenous Languages around the world.

It is a powerful opportunity to celebrate the richness of our Languages and bring attention to the urgent need for their revival. Guided by the principle of **'nothing for us without us'**, the decade highlights the strength of Indigenous leadership and action.

The NSW International Decade of Indigenous Languages Strategy builds on the Trust's current work and reflects our ongoing commitment to support NSW Aboriginal Communities through seven measurable and practical goals, to be delivered during the 2022-2032 decade.

I look forward to working together to embed our Languages in ways that honour thousands of years of continuous Language, storytelling, and cultural knowledge. Our Languages are—and always have been—etched into our waterways, rivers, mountains, and Country, holding deep connections to culture, kinship, and identity.



Elley Blacklock
Acting Executive Director

The NSW IDIL Strategy 2022-2032 at a glance

OUR VISION

All NSW Aboriginal Languages are strong and healthy.

OUR PURPOSE

We aid in the growth and nurturing of NSW Aboriginal Languages by responding to the aspirations of Communities and participating in their self-determining work to reclaim and reawaken their Languages.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Language belongs to Country and as Custodians Communities determine their Language needs and priorities.

Language thrives when we share Knowledge and learnings.

Language weaves Kinship, Country and stories together.

Language is central to identity and wellbeing, and it must be invested in.

1 GROWTH

Supporting Aboriginal Communities to grow the use, scope and Cultural integrity of their Languages according to their self-determined goals.

Commitment 1: offer scholarships to Aboriginal people

Commitment 2: new Community-led Language Centres

2 KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Improving the capacity for language to be accessed, researched, learnt, taught and promoted across NSW.

Commitment 3: 10 major pieces of research

Commitment 4: online portal for the sharing of Language information

3 COLLABORATION

Facilitating collaboration between Language communities through a strong Languages network.

Commitment 5: Aboriginal Language Use Guidelines

Commitment 6: formal networks

4 HEALING & TRUTH-TELLING

Enabling greater acknowledgement and understanding of the impacts of Language loss and healing through Language.

Commitment 7: case studies that create space for truth-telling

Introduction

Following on from the International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (International Decade) to draw global attention to the critical situation of many Indigenous Languages worldwide and to mobilise stakeholders and resources for their revitalisation and promotion.

A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Australia is a member of UNESCO's Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages. Australia's launch of the International Decade was held at the 2023 PULiMA Indigenous Languages and Technology Conference on Larrakia Country, Darwin.

This marked the release of Voices of Country — Australia's Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032, co-authored by the International Decade of Indigenous Languages Directions Group and the Australian Government. Voices of Country provides a framework to guide Australia's participation in the International Decade and is a call to action for all stakeholders.

The NSW International Decade of Indigenous Languages Strategy aligns with the Voices of Country action plan and builds on our commitment to meet the needs of Aboriginal Languages across NSW. The NSW strategy reflects and extends on commitments made in the Aboriginal Languages Trust Strategic Plan.

Statement of Intent

“Aboriginal Languages are upheld, protected, revitalised, promoted and used across all socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and political domains and are drivers for building peace, justice, development and reconciliation in our societies.”

(adapted from the UNESCO Global Action Plan)

Overview

- The strategy incorporates and builds on previous and current contributions to Language revitalisation.
- The Strategy's seven commitments align with the Trust's Strategic Plan and Consultations Outcome Report.
- The pillars of the strategy were formed through global research and recommendations (UNESCO Global Action Plan 2021), internal research and extensive consultations with NSW Language Communities.
- The Strategy reflects the the themes of the national Voices Of Country action plan as well as the Trust's current Vision, Purpose and Principles.
- The seven commitments demonstrate the Trust's existing intentions to work towards achieving the primary outcomes in tangible, measurable ways.

This strategy reinforces and amplifies the aspirations of NSW Language Communities and provides an opportunity to collaborate and make sustainable progress toward stronger and healthier Aboriginal Languages in NSW.



PILLAR ONE Growth

Supporting Aboriginal Communities to grow the use, scope and Cultural integrity of their Languages according to their self-determined goals.

The Trust is committed to the growth and sustainability of Aboriginal Languages in NSW and will:

- **Offer scholarships to Aboriginal people** for Language related study for each year of the International Decade
- Support the establishment of **new Community-led Language Centres**, with a goal of 10 Language Centres operating across the state by 2032.

PILLAR ONE

Growth

Commitment One

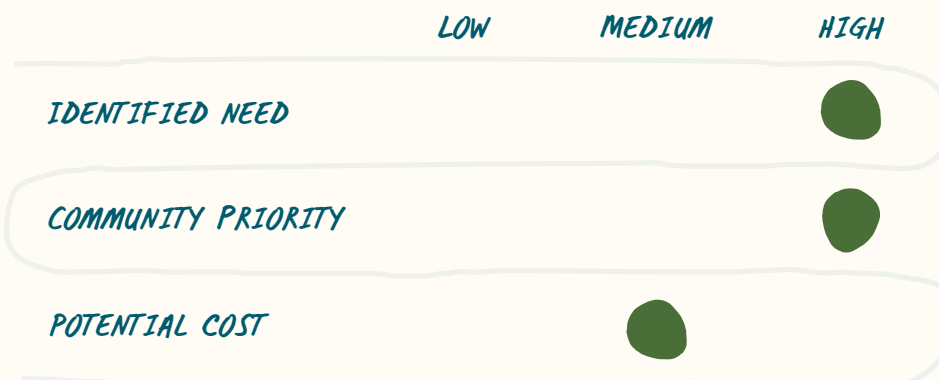
The Trust commits to offering scholarships to Aboriginal people for Language related study for each year of the Decade.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

There is a shortage of qualified Aboriginal people to undertake Language teaching and other Language work in NSW. Educational institutions report difficulties in finding qualified Language teachers (both in terms of Language skills and teaching qualifications). There are few Aboriginal people in NSW with qualifications in linguistics or related fields. Language related career paths are poorly understood. Course fees, travel expenses and the ability to take time off work to attend study can be barriers to accessing courses.

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

These scholarships will support Aboriginal people who are undertaking training or education related to learning or teaching Aboriginal Languages with course fees and other expenses related to their studies. With more people trained and qualified in Languages, the Aboriginal Languages workforce will grow and we will get closer to meeting the demand for Aboriginal Language teachers in NSW.



PILLAR ONE

Growth

Commitment Two

The Trust commits to support the establishment of new Community-led Language Centres, with a goal of 10 Language Centres operating across the state by 2032.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

During consultation on the Trust's Strategic Plan, Language Practitioners and Community members made it clear that they wanted greater access to Language Centres to support Language activities in each Community. The existing Language Centres wish to do more but operate on limited funding, and the majority of NSW Aboriginal Language Communities have no access to a Language Centre at all.

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

The Trust will develop a unique program in which multi-year delivery partnerships with new and existing Language Centres are explored. This program will look to include funding for start-up Language Centres to develop their businesses and further strategic and business planning support for existing Centres, as well as networking opportunities.

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
IDENTIFIED NEED			●
COMMUNITY PRIORITY			●
POTENTIAL COST			●

PILLAR TWO

Knowledge Sharing

Improving the capacity for language to be accessed, researched, learnt, taught and promoted across NSW.

The Trust is committed to knowledge sharing across the Aboriginal Languages sector through several mechanisms such as research, raising awareness and promoting opportunities for Aboriginal Communities to gain access to technology, Language Centres and Country for Language education. The Trust commits to:

- producing at least **10 major pieces of research**, including one longitudinal study, that translate into meaningful and useful resources for Communities, by 2032.
- developing an **online portal for the sharing of Language information** and resources by 2032.



Knowledge Sharing

Commitment Three

The Trust commits to producing at least 10 major pieces of research, including one longitudinal study, that translate into meaningful and useful resources for Communities, by 2032.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

High-impact research is essential to help grow and nurture NSW Aboriginal Languages. There are currently few studies on Aboriginal Languages and related activities in NSW. Studies based on Communities in other countries and states, while a useful reference, are less relevant to the unique NSW context.

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

The Trust will deliver credible research that translates to practical resources for Aboriginal Communities to use in their Language revitalisation work. This will provide the evidence required to influence policymakers and funding bodies to better support Language Communities. Read more about the Trust's planned research projects in the Five-Year Research Agenda.



Knowledge Sharing

Commitment Four

The Trust commits to developing an online portal for the sharing of Language information and resources by 2032.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Language Practitioners have told us that there is a great need for a platform where they can connect, share and learn from and support one another in a Culturally safe space. Currently no such platform exists. Practitioners are interested in understanding how others are planning and progressing with their Language revitalisation work, how they've set up programs and projects and what resources they've used

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

The Trust will develop a custom-designed online portal that Language Practitioners from across NSW can use to share information and knowledge about Languages, Languages teaching, events, funding and more.

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
IDENTIFIED NEED		●	
COMMUNITY PRIORITY		●	
POTENTIAL COST		●	

PILLAR THREE

Collaboration

Facilitating collaboration between Language communities through a strong Languages network.

Collaboration is vital to Aboriginal Communities achieving their Language goals. Collaboration needs to occur not only between the Trust and governments, corporates and non-government organisations, but also between Language Communities to achieve the support and recognition that will enable Aboriginal Language outcomes to be achieved. Facilitating these connections and creating formalised networks amongst Aboriginal Language organisations and Communities allows for greater distribution of knowledge and processes as well as navigating the complexities of Language spanning across multiple Communities. The Trust commits to:

- partnering with government, corporates and non-government organisations to sign-up to **Aboriginal Language Use Guidelines** that recognise the Cultural and Intellectual Property of Aboriginal Peoples.
- creating **formal networks** to increase opportunities for collaboration between Aboriginal Language groups.

PILLAR THREE

Collaboration

Commitment Five

The Trust commits to partnering with governments, corporates and non-government organisations to sign-up to Aboriginal Language Use Guidelines that recognise the Cultural and Intellectual Property of Aboriginal Peoples.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

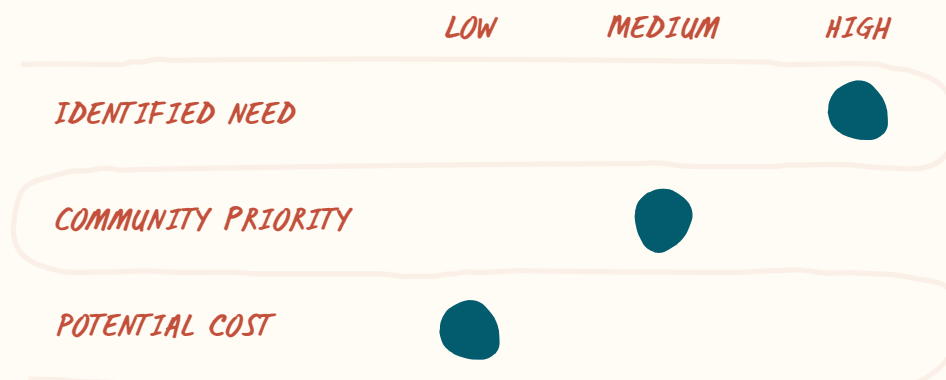
Aboriginal Communities and the Trust are regularly approached by government departments, corporations and other organisations and groups wanting to use Aboriginal Language in their projects. Examples of these requests include: for Acknowledgements of Country (email signatures/signage), meeting room naming, building naming, project or program naming. Often the party requesting the use of Language has little knowledge of Cultural protocols or Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property.

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

The Trust will publish Aboriginal Language Use Guidelines that will raise awareness of the need to respect the Cultural and Intellectual Property of Aboriginal Languages and promote respectful ways of working with Communities in relation to their Languages.

Alliances with governments and organisations that sign up to the Guidelines will ensure Aboriginal Community control of their Languages when used by others.

Language Practitioners from across NSW can use to share information and knowledge about Languages, Languages teaching, events, funding and more.



PILLAR THREE

Collaboration

Commitment Six

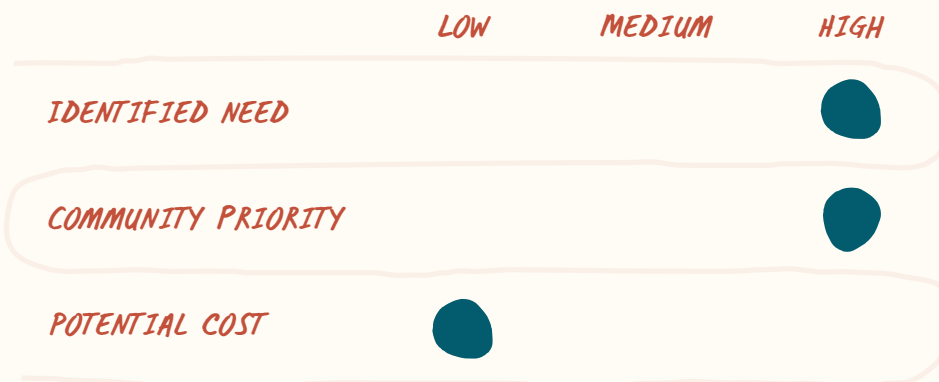
The Trust commits to creating formal networks to increase opportunities for collaboration between Aboriginal Language groups.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Many Language Communities across the state are currently isolated from each other, either geographically or socially, or simply do not know who each other are so that connections can be made.

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

The Trust will work with Aboriginal Communities across NSW to identify opportunities to create Communities of Practice and regional networks, who meet regularly to share and learn from each other.



PILLAR FOUR

Healing and Truth-Telling

Enabling greater acknowledgement and understanding of the impacts of Language loss and healing through Language.

The deep and ongoing impacts of policies and practices that sought to extinguish Aboriginal Languages in NSW are only beginning to be understood by the broader Australian community. More work needs to be undertaken to bring individual's and Communities' stories of Language loss and healing to the forefront so that the importance of Aboriginal Languages is recognised. The Trust commits to:

- developing **case studies that create space for truth-telling** about Language loss and healing through Language.



PILLAR FOUR

Healing and Truth-Telling

Commitment Seven

The Trust commits to developing case studies that create space for truth-telling about Language loss and healing through Language.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Truth telling is an essential part of Language work so that there is education and awareness about why Language was taken away and the importance of reconnecting Aboriginal people with their Languages. Many Aboriginal people told us that they felt it was important for them to honour their Old People, some of whom were denied Language, and others who kept Language safe despite threats of violence. Communities told us that the Trust needs to take a trauma-informed approach to our work with Aboriginal Languages and Communities.

WHAT WILL THIS DELIVER?

These case studies will provide first-hand accounts of stories from Aboriginal Community members who have been impacted by both the loss and reclamation of their Languages. This will enable greater understanding of the importance of Languages and the emotional journey of revitalising Language.



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