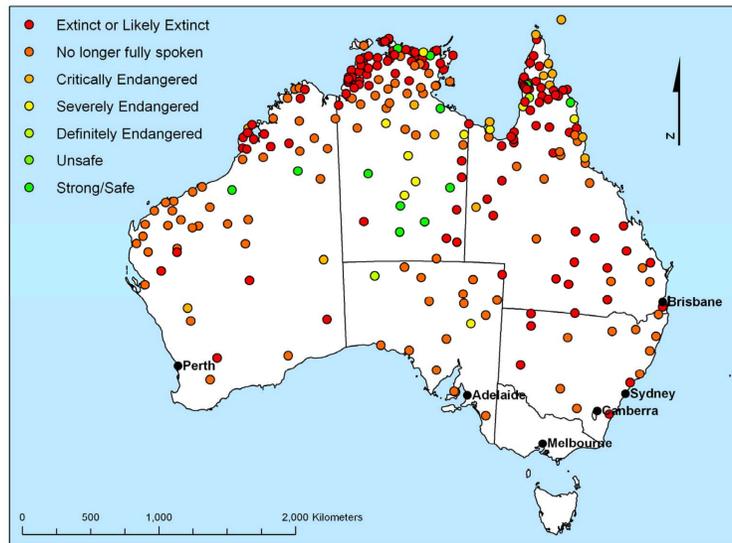


Halting the Loss of Indigenous Australian Languages: Strengthening Bilingualism in Indigenous Communities through Teacher Training

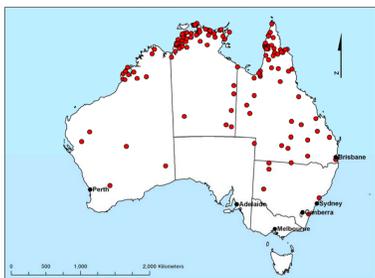
250+ Indigenous Languages of Australia



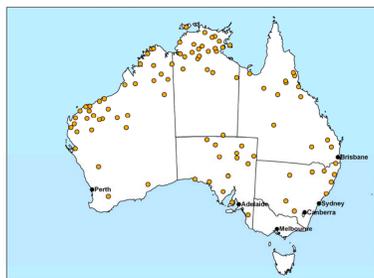
What is an Endangered Language?
The term endangered language refers to there being few speakers of the language, and it not being passed on to younger generations in a sustainable manner. The loss of a language means the loss of a culture, people, and identity. Of the approximately 145 indigenous languages still spoken in Australia today, most are endangered, many of them critically. The term “critically endangered” indicates that a language is spoken only by small groups of people,

mostly over 40 years old. A dozen languages are “strong” or “safe” in the sense of being spoken by all age groups, but three or four of these are showing some signs of moving into endangerment. Many other languages are not fully spoken by anybody, termed “no longer fully spoken,” but words and phrases are used, and there is great community support in many parts of the country for reclamation and heritage learning programs for such languages.

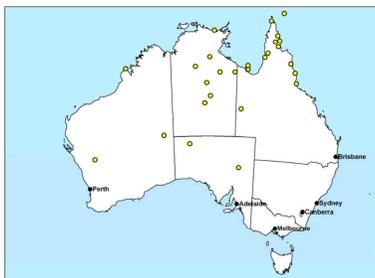
130+ Languages Already Extinct



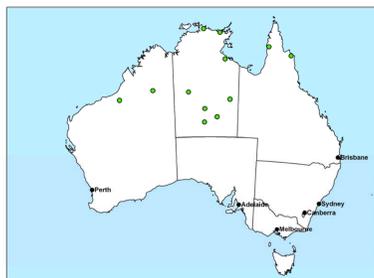
100 Languages No Longer Fully Spoken



27 Languages Endangered



12 Languages Strong/Safe



Yipirinya School Choir, Northern Territory. Photo by Faith Baisden

The Situation of Indigenous Australian Languages

At the time of European settlement of Australia in 1788 there were over 250 languages spoken by the indigenous peoples. Today, tragically, over half of these languages have already become extinct. In 2005 the federal government commissioned a National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) to determine the status of Australia’s Indigenous Languages. The NILS released its findings a report stating that “the situation of Australia’s languages is very grave and requires urgent action.” Of the approximately 145 indigenous languages still spoken in Australia today, most are endangered, many of them critically. Language preservation is becoming an increasing priority for the Australian government. Factors which increase the risk of language loss in indigenous communities include:

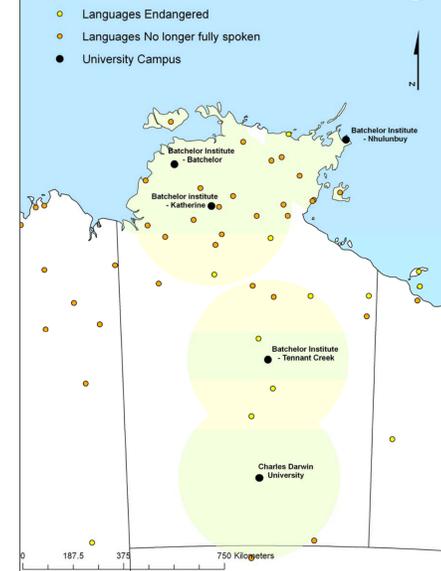
- (1) proximity to major population centers;
- (2) lack of employment opportunities,

Sources

World Language Mapping System CD-ROM Version 3.2
Australian Census 2006 Datapacks CD-ROM
Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian Government
Australian Indigenous Languages Database: <http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au/main.php>
Poster created by Jasmine Barrett



Northern Territory



Northern Territory

The Northern Territory is home to several campuses of the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education as well as the Charles Darwin University. The green buffer zones indicate a 300 km area surrounding the university campuses, in which several endangered languages fall. Each university should collaborate with the indigenous communities in their areas to create teacher training programs and develop bilingual education for indigenous children.

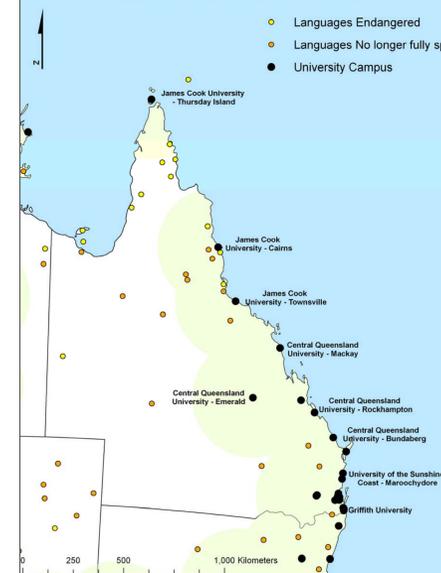
Western Australia



Western Australia

The academic community has spearheaded the movement to preserve indigenous languages, so they are the ideal places for instituting language preservation programs. The University of Notre Dame, Curtin University of Technology, and Edith Cowen University, are located in Western Australia and all have campuses near indigenous communities.

Queensland



Queensland

Central Queensland University, University of the Sunshine Coast, and James Cook University all have campuses located within 300 km of indigenous communities where endangered languages are spoken. These universities are in an ideal position to collaborate with local indigenous communities on language preservation programs.