

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2017

Australian Statement

Item 12

**Future work of the Permanent Forum
International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019**

Thank you Madam Chair.

Australia would like to voice its support for the International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019.

Through our language and arts programme, Australia promotes the sharing of language and culture between generations. Indigenous languages and arts enrich the social, cultural and economic life of for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and all Australians.

We understand that arts and language are essential to the wellbeing, culture and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our actions are in line with, and support, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 13.

Australia's Indigenous Languages and Arts programme provides funding to 21 Indigenous language centres which undertake language revival and maintenance work on 159 languages. Their work is informed by Indigenous reference groups which include representatives of each language.

Language Centres coordinate local language projects, develop language resources, undertake language research, train language workers, act as a central repository for resources and language data, and establish and maintain partnerships with Indigenous communities and linguists.

For example, the Yugambeh Museum, Language and Heritage Centre is using technology in an innovative way to preserve, protect, share and celebrate the Yugambeh and other languages. They recently launched Australia's first multi-language Aboriginal language app and Yugambeh TV featuring unique content for the local Indigenous community.

We also acknowledge a request earlier from Permanent Forum member to share approaches being taken within our education system, to identify ways in which indigenous languages are being shared and promoted within our school system.

We are pleased to advise the Forum that the *Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages* was added to the Australian Curriculum in 2015. The inclusion of this Framework is in recognition that these are the original languages of this country.

Through learning indigenous languages, students gain access to knowledge and understanding of Australia that can only come from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective. The languages by their nature embed this perspective.

Learning to use these unique languages can play an important part in the development of a strong sense of identity, pride and self-esteem for all Australian students. This Framework guides the development of curriculum and school programmes for teaching Indigenous languages.

Education systems can play a vital role in facilitating access to language learning and supporting community language revival and maintenance.

Australia supports the Permanent Forum undertaking more work to promote and defend indigenous languages, and would be pleased to share more about our programme, and to learn about other approaches to promoting and protecting indigenous languages.

We would also encourage the Forum to consider the role of partnerships in the context of its future work program, including in the protection and promotion of indigenous languages. A focus on strengthening partnerships in the future work program, including cross-sectorial (business) and inter-governmental, would assist to foster genuine and authentic working relationships with Indigenous peoples, Member States and Civil Society.