

# Australia



## Supporting Indigenous Translation

### Overview

Bible Society Australia (BSA) is committed to helping Indigenous Australian's Open The Bible in their heart languages. Working closely with local Indigenous translators, their churches, as well as mission partner organisations, Bible Society helps coordinate several translation projects. Amongst other things, BSA funds translation workshops and provides expertise through translation consultants.

### The Need

In 2005 the National Indigenous Language Survey said, "all of Australia's Indigenous languages face an uncertain future if immediate action and care are not taken."

It is widely acknowledged that the Bible is the most important source of usable connected discourses in endangered Australian languages. Rev Dr John Harris, historian and author of One Blood says, "This is not simply a biased religious perspective but an undeniable historic fact, the only people in the past who have cared enough about Aboriginal languages to translate anything substantial have been Christian linguists. In so many cases, their texts are the only real record of the language. Such texts are now highly valued in universities and other secular institutions as the only materials with which to revive and preserve a language."

Translating the Bible into Indigenous languages has always been, and remains, critically important. They are the heart languages of many people. A heart language is the language a person thinks and dreams in. Many Indigenous people speak some English, however much of what they read in English versions of the Bible can be confusing and complicated.



# > 155

of the estimated 300 or more languages first spoken in Australia have disappeared.

# 110

languages are critically endangered (of the 145 languages left).

## Goals

Bible Society Australia's goal is to continue supporting the translation of Indigenous heart languages into Scripture. As part the overall Bible Translation Process, Bible Society will continue to ensure there are adequately trained and mentored Translation Consultants to check and endorse Scripture translations. This is crucial to ensuring that any translated resources convey the original meaning of Scripture as accurately as possible.

In 2023, Bible Society will continue partnering with the Pitjantjatjara (Anangu) people of Central Australia to translate the Old Testament into Pitjantjatjara. Work will continue on drafting the

remaining Old Testament books into Pitjantjatjara language along with editing, community consultation and consultancy checking, before these translations are ready for publication. It is hoped that most of the Old Testament will be at the 'first draft' stage or beyond by the end of 2023.

Work also continues on the translation of the Gospel of Matthew into the Western Australian language of Noongar. Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7 were translated and checked in 2022, and another team of Noongar Translators completed the translation of the Story of Jesus' Birth for Children. The *Jesus is Born* Children's Christmas story

was launched and made available to Noongar speakers in late 2022. The Noongar Translation Team are also working on translating the Children's Bible Storybook, *Jesus and the Storm*, and plans are in place to publish *Jesus and the Storm* in Noongar in 2023.

A National Gathering of Bible Translation Agencies is planned for early February 2023, at which future plans for Bible translation will be discussed.

## Impact

More than 10,000 people will be impacted by the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament Translation.

The number of Noongar speakers, according to a 2016 census is at 443 and is increasing every year.

## Testimonies

"It is an awesome thing for the word of God to be in the heart language of the people because it is Jesus coming to become like an Aboriginal person, knowing the people, their feelings, the hurts, the pain, in their whole identity."

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Djambarrpuyngu Translator*

## Prayer Needs

- Thank God for the many different languages that are spoken here in Australia, and for the early missionaries who learnt and translated many of these languages.
- Thank God also for the local mother tongue translators who shared their language with these missionaries, helping to make translation possible.
- Pray for the Indigenous languages of this nation, some are still spoken today but many have fallen asleep and are no longer heard.
- Pray that these languages may be preserved and revived through Bible translation.
- Thank God that we can continue to support the translation of Scripture into the Indigenous languages of Australia, that we can journey together with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, acknowledging them as the custodians of their languages.

