



## Supporting Indigenous Translation

### Overview

Bible Society Australia (BSA) is committed to helping Indigenous Australian's Open The Bible in their heart languages. Collaborating with local translators, churches, and partner organisations, BSA coordinates and funds workshops and provides expertise through translation consultants. To further the work of Bible translation, BSA supports the training of local Bible translators through the Nungalinga Theological College in Darwin.



# 1,209

language varieties are recognised by AIATSIS

# 3,000+

speak Pitjantjatjara as their first language, with another 5,000 speaking it as their second or third language.

# 1,500+

speak Noongar (notable rise from 443 in 2016 as per the 2021 census)

# 400+

languages are listed on BSA's Translation Roadmap, with 27 active and possibly 100+ potential language translation projects in the future

### The Need

At the time of European settlement, around 250-300 languages were spoken across Australia. Today, BSA's Translation Roadmap lists over 400, including new creoles, 'Aboriginal' English, clan languages and dialects. Though there is some dispute over the precise number of languages and dialects (due to varied definitions of language and dialect), the need for more Bible translation work in Australian Indigenous languages is undeniable.

From 415 languages and dialects, only one complete Bible is available. Significantly, many Indigenous groups continue to voice the need for Bible translations in their languages, requesting support in translating the Bible into their own languages.

**"After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands."**

Revelation 7:9, NLT

# Goals

BSA's goal is to enable Bible Translation in every key Indigenous language requesting it, through traditional methods or Oral Bible Translation, promoting individual and community transformation.

In 2024, the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament Project will continue translating the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah, 2 Samuel, and Proverbs, with plans underway to print Esther and Judges as single-volume editions.

Two teams of Noongar translators will continue working on the Gospel of Matthew and Psalm 23, with plans to begin translating the Gospel of John.

BSA (along with several key mission partners) will also continue to partner with Nungalinya College in Darwin to provide formal training for Indigenous translators. This year, two language groups (Yolngu Matha and Murrinhpatha) will complete the second year of the three-year Translation Certificate course. A new language group (Bininj Kunwok) will commence the first year of the course.

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# Impact

Having the Bible in your heart language reinforces culture and group identity, particularly for translators working hard to restore and revive their languages. It speaks to the very core of your being and your understanding of yourself and of God.

The impact of Bible translation is demonstrated by translator Djawut Gondarra from Arnhem Land, who chose Scripture portions in all 13 clan languages over a full Bible in one common Yolngu Matha language, emphasising language's role in identity.

In 2023, significant strides were made in translation projects. The Pitjantjatjara team completed the book of Esther and several Psalms and demonstrated their commitment by submitting a hand-written draft of the entire Book of Ezra. Ultimately, this Bible translation work will influence over 10,000 people. Concurrently, the Bunbury-based Noongar team finished translating the Genesis Creation Story, marking another milestone in preserving Indigenous languages and cultures.

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# Testimonies

"The [Pitjantjatjara] ladies I asked were unsure about [the word 'tjinytjira', used in Isaiah 14:23 to describe the land of Babylon after God had 'swept it' with the broom of destruction] ... [they] thought in the old days this word was used to describe ground once a heavy rain had washed away trees and shrubs, leaving only debris." — Dave Barnett, Pitjantjatjara Translation Project Advisor. This anecdote demonstrates how the Pitjantjatjara translation of the Old Testament continues to preserve this significant language for future generations.

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# Prayer Needs

- Thank God that BSA 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 beautiful and unique languages.
- Pray for good health and peace for the translators across Australia working in Bible Translation. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be close to them, guiding them as they translate, revealing the message of God's love in a clear and profound way.
- Pray for Australia's First Nations people, for God's healing and restoration, that as communities across Australia Open The Bible in their own heart languages, they will be transformed and know God's unfailing love for them.