

Australia



Indigenous Publishing for Bible Engagement

Project: N/A
Tax Deductible



54%

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
identify as Christians

45-65%

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander adults are functionally non-
literate

In 2007

the first full Indigenous Bible was
published in Kriol

Overview

Bible Society Australia (BSA) prints, reprints and distributes Indigenous language Scriptures across Australia, ensuring communities' access to the Bible and culturally relevant Scripture resources to promote Bible engagement within Indigenous communities.

The Need

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians depend on English translations, yet these translations can often be confusing, leading to misunderstanding and poor theology. Easy-to-understand materials in Indigenous languages are needed for personal understanding of God's teachings, enabling individuals to mature in their faith and share their faith with others in their communities.

Low English literacy, which affects approximately 40% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (rising to 70% in remote areas), adds another layer of need for access to easy-to-understand Bible study materials. There also is a need for digital Bibles and Scripture resources, which utilise new technology, to help younger generations connect with the Bible.

Moreover, as all Australian Indigenous languages are considered to be at risk (vulnerable or endangered), there is a pressing need to safeguard these languages. Culturally appropriate resources not only enhance Bible engagement but also play a vital role in protecting cultural heritage and promoting literacy development. By addressing these needs, BSA can empower Indigenous communities to connect with their faith and heritage more effectively.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, - Isaiah 55:10-11a, NIV

Goals

BSA aims to publish Indigenous language Bibles immediately after translations are complete. The goal in publishing these Bibles and Scripture resources is to reinforce Christian foundations in these communities, and enable the non-literate, children, youth, prisoners and hospital patients to engage with God's word. In doing so, BSA aims to share the love of Jesus, aiding Christians in their faith and understanding of God. These resources also provide support for hospital chaplains, community workers, local ministers and Sunday school workers.

A current focus is providing children's resources in language for remote communities. A Pitjantjatjara children's book based on the Apostle's Creed is scheduled for publishing in early 2025, and work is ongoing on a Big Picture Children's Bible in the Kriol language. Children's Bible Storybooks in both Pitjantjatjara and Adnyamathanha have been printed and will be distributed in 2025, along with a children's 'Life of Joseph' storybook in Western Arrarnta. In addition, Bible Society Australia aims to develop effective English and vernacular Literacy Programs to address the low level of literacy within Indigenous communities.

Testimony

"We adults have been translating God's story only for older people! But [Nami] showed that it's for children as well, and so now they have come together and made this book. Children can now look at this book and realised, 'Oh wow, Jesus truly is for us, for children as well.'" — Tjikatu Burton, Anangu Translator speaking at the launch of Godaku Tjukurpa

Prayer Points

- Please pray for wisdom as we develop culturally appropriate Bible engagement resources for Indigenous communities in Australia, sowing seeds of faith among youth, and providing hope and comfort to those in hospitals and prisons.
- Thank God for the Indigenous Christian leaders being raised up to effectively teach the Bible, especially to younger generations, and pray that Bible Society can support these ministries with strong theological resources.
- Please pray for effective collaboration between Bible Society Australia, Indigenous translators, communities, churches, and other organisations, fostering Christ-like unity and love in Bible engagement initiatives.

Impact

In 2024, BSA developed and published Scripture Engagement resources in Indigenous languages, making them practical, beautiful, and affordable for communities. One notable example is the Pitjantjatjara Children's Art Bible, *Godaku Tjukurpa*, inspired by artist and translator, Nami Kulyuru. With support from fellow Pitjantjatjara translators, *Godaku Tjukurpa* was completed and published in late 2024. The launch event on November 2 at Emmaus Christian College in Adelaide showcased all 54 paintings and drew over 200 attendees, resulting in the sale of over 130 books.

Digital resources remain effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to engage with the Bible. In 2024, the [aboriginal.bibles](#) website and the Australian Bibles app (which contain all published Scripture in Indigenous languages) received updates. This included the addition of three Lumo Jesus Films in the languages of Ngaanyatjarra, Kriol and Yumplatok, with assistance from Faith Comes by Hearing. These films will be embraced by these language's communities and will aid in both outreach and discipleship.