

Australia



Indigenous Translation

Project: N/A
Tax Deductible



400+

languages are listed on BSA's Translation Roadmap, with only 1 complete Bible, the Kriol Bible

25

Indigenous languages across Australia have active translation projects

Overview

Bible Society Australia (BSA) is dedicated to making the Bible accessible to all Australians, with a special focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Our goal is to enable Bible translation in every key Indigenous language requesting it, using both traditional Translation methods and Oral Bible Translation (OBT).

The Need

Of the 415 Australian Indigenous languages and dialects identified on the Bible Society Australia's Translation Roadmap only one has a completed Bible available — the Kriol Bible. This stark reality underscores the pressing need for more translation work to ensure Indigenous communities across Australia can access Scripture in their heart languages.

The importance of this work extends beyond spiritual considerations. Bible translation serves as a powerful tool for language preservation and cultural identity. With many Indigenous languages at risk of extinction, translating the Bible provides a means to document, revitalise, and maintain these unique linguistic heritages. It also affirms the value of Indigenous cultures, hearing God's word in your heart language conveys the message that 'God loves my people too'.

Currently, translation projects are active in at least 25 Indigenous languages across Australia. However, with only 30% of Australian Indigenous languages having some portion of Scripture, there remains a significant need for continued efforts in this field in the future.

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 aims to facilitate Bible translation in key Indigenous languages. In 2025, the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament translation project will hold consultant workshops to finalise checks for 2 Samuel, Proverbs, and Psalms, with plans to publish these works as a single volume, improving community access to Scripture.

The Noongar Bible Translation Project will engage the Noongar community in 2025, offering translated Scriptures, including the Creation Story and final checks on Matthew's Gospel draft translations. This project integrates translation with language preservation techniques to enhance language revitalisation through new audio and digital resources, strengthening cultural identity and spiritual connections for future generations.

Additionally, BSA will continue its partnership with Nungalinya College in Darwin, providing formal training for Indigenous translators. BSA's support helps fund the Certificate II in Bible Translation. In 2025, the first two language groups will graduate, while the Kunwok Biniji group continues and a new Tiwi group begins. There are also plans for a Certificate III course in Bible Translation.

Impact

Indigenous Bible translation projects in Australia significantly impact cultural identity and language revitalisation. Translators emphasise the importance of Scripture in their heart languages, which strengthens community ties and personal understanding of faith.

The Pitjantjatjara Old Testament Project is now 55% complete, progressing at 15% annually. The team's aim in the coming years is to finish this first complete Bible in a traditional Indigenous language, impacting over 3,000 Pitjantjatjara speakers and an additional 5,000 who use it as a second or third language.

Meanwhile, the Noongar translation project has completed 60% of the Gospel of Matthew, with chapters 1-21 drafted in 2024 and key passages from Genesis and John's Gospel checked. This effort empowers Noongar communities by providing access to Scripture and enabling them to reclaim and preserve their languages, fostering deeper connections to their cultural heritage and spirituality. These projects position the Bible as a crucial tool for reinforcing identity and restoring language, ensuring meaningful engagement with faith for future generations.

Testimony

"It's important to my people, to learn about the Bible and understand in language. It will touch their hearts deeper because in English they don't understand those big words. So we decided to make a Bible in Iwaidja so they can understand deeper." — Isobel Lamilami, Iwaidja Bible Translator

Prayer Points

- Please pray for wisdom and guidance for Indigenous brothers and sisters working on Bible Translation in Australia, that God raises up new young Indigenous Bible Translators to contribute to this important work.
- Pray for unity and collaboration among the various organisations and churches involved in Indigenous Bible translation across Australia. Pray that all may work together as one, honouring each other and reflecting God's love and unity.