

An Australian Parliament to Recognize and Revive Indigenous Languages for the First Time in the Nation's History

As reported by ABC.net.au in October 2017, NSW Parliament in Sydney ushered in a historic piece of legislation — the Aboriginal Languages Bill. As part of the new legislation, the State Government said it would appoint an independent panel of Aboriginal language experts, and establish a new languages center.

Language revival has mostly been a grassroots movement, and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council wants it to stay that way. Barkindji man Murray Butcher spoke in his Indigenous language, urging the Parliament not to try to control the preservation of Indigenous languages: “Put the power back in our people to save our languages and give us the power to control our destiny.”

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Sarah Mitchell said that about 1,800 people spoke Aboriginal languages in NSW, with Wiradjuri being the most widely spoken. An estimated 35 original languages are spoken across the state, with dozens of different dialects and varying levels of fluency. For decades, speaking Indigenous languages was discouraged by state governments.