



**AIATSIS**  
Australian Institute of Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

# MEDIA RELEASE

*Worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present*

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## **AIATSIS wins ‘Government Agency of the Year’ for Keeping Languages Alive**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) was tonight awarded ‘Government Agency of the Year - Using Information, Communication and Technology to Connect to the Community’ for its’ highly acclaimed online languages resource, AUSTLANG.

“This award highlights the positive impact of using technology to bridge the distance between communities and to provide comprehensive resources and information in a very accessible and dynamic online format,” said Mr Russell Taylor, Principal of AIATSIS.

“Importantly, this award reaffirms the importance of assisting Australia’s Indigenous peoples to maintain and revitalise language and of enabling all Australians to learn more about the languages of the First Australians.”

AUSTLANG provides wide-ranging online access to information on Australian Indigenous languages and it is an important tool for Indigenous Australians. Today just 18 of the estimated 250 languages, unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at the time of European colonisation, are spoken across all generations; more than half of the 250 languages are no longer spoken; and, the remaining languages could cease being spoken in the next 10 to 30 years as older generations pass away.

“Language is an important embodiment of cultural heritage, knowledge, tradition and identity unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Keeping languages alive or reviving languages is vital for Australia’s Indigenous people’s identity and spiritual grounds,” said Mr Taylor. “Awareness by all Australians of the richness and diversity of the cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including language, is also important in promoting greater understanding, respect and reconciliation.”

AUSTLANG’s dynamic web-based features make it possible to search for Australian Indigenous languages by language name, place name or by navigating Australia through Google Maps. AUSTLANG is the result of collaboration between AIATSIS and the Australian National University.

The Australian Community Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Awards are presented by Connecting Up Australia, an organisation that provides resources and tools to assist non-profit organisations to connect to their communities and each other ([www.connectingup.org](http://www.connectingup.org)). The awards, presented under six different categories, were presented at the Connecting Up 2009 Conference Dinner at the Novotel, Brighton Beach in Sydney on 11 May 2009.

**Click here to visit AUSTLANG: <http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au>**

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