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THE USE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS

If you have ever travelled to a non English speaking country you would have experienced first hand, the frustrations of not being able to effectively communicate or comprehend what is going on around you. You would also know what a relief it is to find someone who can speak *your* language.

Even if you are able to speak or understand another language, your first language is undoubtedly your most powerful and effective tool of communication. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students English is their *second* language. As a consequence, when these children enter an English speaking school they are instantly disadvantaged in their ability to learn as effectively as children who come from English speaking backgrounds.

Cultural maintenance is another important reason for the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages in schools. Language conveys many cultural markers. Ignoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages in schools, ultimately undermines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island identity and the validity of their languages.

