## Trends in Indigenous Language Usage 2011

## Abstract

*There has been substantial research into trends in maintenance and shift of community languages among Australian migrants; however, similar studies for Indigenous language usage in Australia are scarce. Studies of language maintenance and shift have tended to focus on language shift across specific languages. In this paper, we report on a study based on census data to identify reports of Indigenous language usage across three census periods; 2001, 2006 and 2011. The study examines the linguistic distribution of Indigenous language groups and identifies changes in numbers of speakers of specific Indigenous languages over the last intercensal period. It then investigates language use on the basis of the age and gender distribution of Indigenous language speakers. We conclude with a discussion of the motivations for some of the changes observed in the language landscapes of Indigenous languages in Australia. This analysis has highlighted the volatile state of Indigenous languages in Australia. The main findings reflect this as there has been a decline in the proportion of Indigenous Australians who report speaking an Indigenous language at home; however, that more people are identifying as Indigenous Australians is encouraging as there has been a sustained growth of the Indigenous population over the decade.*