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TSRA FUNDED TO HELP PRESERVE LANGUAGES

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) will receive \$400,000 in 2015-16 from the Federal Government to establish a language centre on Thursday Island.

The funding from the Ministry for the Arts - Attorney-General's Department, is being provided via the languages stream of the Indigenous Languages and Arts program, which supports community driven activities designed to address the erosion and loss of Indigenous languages across Australia.

TSRA Chairman, Mr Joseph Elu, said traditional languages are essential to the wellbeing, culture and identity of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples.

"Addressing the loss of critically endangered languages in the Torres Strait is very important, and this funding will contribute towards establishing a regional languages centre," Mr Elu said.

"Through consultation and workshops earlier this year we have developed a three year languages plan that will help guide the centre's development.

"This has been a collaborative effort between the TSRA and TAGAI College working with communities and elders to produce the plan and I'm looking forward to seeing the outcomes through having the facility established."

The Indigenous Languages and Arts program aims to showcase, protect and encourage participation in traditional and contemporary Indigenous artistic expression to strengthen pride in identity and culture through language.

"We know from National Indigenous Languages Surveys that the traditional languages Kala Lagaw Ya, Kala Kawaw Ya (dialect) and Meriam Mir are experiencing serious decline in fluent speakers, especially in the younger age groups," Mr Elu said

"The establishment of a regional Language Centre will assist us to focus efforts on these two critically endangered traditional languages, Kala Lagaw Ya and Meriam Mir.

"This funding will also assist us to protect and promote the six dialects spoken in the Torres Strait Island region, Kulkalgau Ya, Kalaw Kawaw Ya, Kawrareg dialect, Mabuyag dialect, Mer dialect, and Erub dialect."

The grant is part of an \$11.9 million commitment from the Federal Government for 2015-16 to support work to revive and maintain Australia's Indigenous languages.

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