# AUSTRALIAN government RESPONSE

## Call for INPUT for the preparation of the report of the international independent expert mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the context of Law Enforcement

Australia thanks the International Independent Expert Mechanism to advance racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement for their invitation to provide a submission to inform their third annual report.

**Language Access and Equity**

An individual’s ability to engage meaningfully with government information is predicated upon their ability to communicate and understand. The provision of adequately translated materials in languages spoken by diverse communities is imperative to advance racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement. Ensuring government agencies and institutions are allocated with sufficient budgets to produce a regular supply of professionally translated information across a large spectrum of language groups is a fundamental enabler to create an environment conducive to informed electoral participation amongst Australian audiences.

Case Study - Australian Context: According to the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census, more than 300 languages, including Indigenous languages, are spoken in Australia. While most Australian residents speak English well, almost 700,000 residents born overseas and aged 5 or over responded in the 2021 Census that they did not speak English well or at all. This number is tracking upwards. In Australia, individuals with limited English proficiency can encounter obstacles in accessing civic education materials and government services. Failure to sufficiently understand essential information may impact an individual’s ability to meaningfully participate in society and for racial justice and equality to be realised.

To chart best practice in achieving positive access and equity outcomes, Australia has in place the [Australian Government Language Services Guidelines](https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settlement-services-subsite/files/language-services-guidelines.pdf). The objective of the guidelines is to encourage and assist Australian Government agencies to implement language services for Australian citizens and permanent and other eligible residents by:

* providing a practical framework for Australian Government agencies to support service delivery to people with limited English proficiency
* encouraging agencies to develop their own policy and procedures for agency-specific language  services tailored to the communication needs of their clients, services and program delivery
* increasing the collaboration and coordination across Australian Government agencies when providing effective language services.