

The Margaret E. Lyttle Foundation
warmly invites you to the

4th ANNUAL ORATION

Presented by

Dr Rachel Nordlinger

**Australia's Indigenous Languages:
What have we got to lose?**

Wednesday, November 16

8.00pm

Kevin Borland Hall
Rear, 395 Barkers Road, Kew

RSVP: Friday November 11



Australian indigenous languages are disappearing at a drastic rate: of the original 260 languages, only 15-18 are now still being acquired by children. The 'State of Indigenous languages in Australia - 2001' report predicts that if these trends continue unchecked, by 2050 there will no longer be any indigenous languages spoken in Australia.

In this talk, drawing on her 20 years of fieldwork experience with indigenous communities of the Northern Territory, Rachel will show how the unique culture and worldview of indigenous Australians is reflected through their languages, and will consider what is at stake if we lose the fight to preserve these fascinating languages, both for indigenous communities themselves, for us as a nation, and for our understanding of what humans are capable of through language.

Dr Rachel Nordlinger (Preshil Class of 1986) is a senior lecturer in linguistics at the University of Melbourne, where she returned after completing her PhD at Stanford University, USA in 1997. For the past 20 years, Rachel has been involved in the description and documentation of indigenous languages of Australia's Northern Territory, working with the Bilinarra, Wambaya, Gudanji, Murrinh-Patha and Marringarr communities to record and preserve their traditional languages. She has also published on syntactic and morphological theory, and in particular, the challenges posed by the complex grammatical structures of Australian Aboriginal languages. Rachel is the author of four books, and numerous articles on Australian Aboriginal languages, and currently leads a 5-year project funded by the Australian Research Council, which examines the ways in which indigenous children learn the traditional language Murrinh-Patha (Wadeye, NT).