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*R. M. W. Dixon*

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## **The Languages of Australia (Cambridge Library Collection - Linguistics) R. M. W. Dixon**

Described by Ken Hale as 'nothing less than a masterpiece' and by P. H. Matthews as 'absolutely clear, astonishingly complete, factually fascinating', *The Languages of Australia* (first published in 1980 and now reissued) was a landmark in Australian linguistics. This pioneering work of synthesis covered more than two hundred Aboriginal languages, and stimulated the next generation of scholarship in the field. The author's subsequent search for an overarching theoretical model to explain the unusual properties of Australian languages finally led him to adopt a 'punctuated equilibrium' model of language development. Dixon proposed this in *The Rise and Fall of Languages* (1997), which provided the framework for his major work *Australian Languages: Their Nature and Development* (2002). *The Languages of Australia* is still sought after, however, as a benchmark in the discipline and because its first four chapters provide a valuable non-technical introduction that does not appear in the 2002 volume.

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