

LANGUAGES WEEK 2019

Statement by Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests) [3.18 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house that Languages Week 2019 has started and will run until 11 August. Languages Week is gaining in prominence and quantity of events in Western Australia each year, as is appropriate in a state in which people speak around 240 languages and dialects, including approximately 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Language abilities increase career opportunities, facilitate links with the rest of the world and increase intercultural understanding. Through funding from the community languages program that is administered by the Office of Multicultural Interests, the state government supports more than 17 000 students across Western Australia to take part in language studies. As part of Languages Week this year, we once again celebrated community language teachers through the Outstanding Community Language Teacher of the Year Award. This award celebrates excellence in teaching by community language teachers and recognises the achievements of WA's culturally and linguistically diverse communities and their contributions to the state. The award is a partnership between the Office of Multicultural Interests and the Community Languages Western Australia, the peak body for community language schools. This year, 14 nominations for the award were received, and the winner is Dr Nirosha "Dilhani" Kapu Arachchilage from the Perth Sinhala School parent and teacher association for her commitment to lifelong learning, self-development and the development of others.

I am pleased to announce that the Office of Multicultural Interests will support the award winners for 2018 and 2019 to attend the National Community Language Schools Conference in Canberra. Due to our advocacy and efforts by Mr Enzo Sirna, AM, the president of Community Languages Western Australia, all Australian jurisdictions have agreed to establish a national award. Each state and territory will select their outstanding award winner based on criteria developed for the Western Australian award and those people will then be nominees for the national award. The national award will begin from 2020 and will form a part of the national community languages conference. I would like to commend teachers of community languages, most of whom are volunteers, for their commitment to extend Western Australia's linguistic diversity.