

**INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2018**

*Statement by Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests*

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests)** [12.12 pm]: I inform the house that International Mother Language Day is being celebrated across the world today—21 February. Proclaimed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in November 1999, International Mother Language Day has been observed every year since February 2000. Its aim is to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The day is now celebrated in many countries, including Bangladesh, Chile, India, Russia, the Philippines, Egypt and Canada.

The date of 21 February was chosen because on this day in 1952, students from the University of Dhaka were shot dead by police while demonstrating for the recognition of their mother language. Their mother language was Bengali, and they wanted it to be recognised as one of the two national languages of East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. This date is of particular importance to the Western Australian Bangladeshi community, which marks and celebrates the day every year. The theme for the 2018 International Mother Language Day is linguistic diversity and multilingualism count for sustainable development. I am sure that members of the house will agree with me that this day has great resonance in Western Australia. In Western Australia, around 240 languages, including Aboriginal languages, are spoken in our richly diverse state. Our state is home to many Aboriginal languages, which are languages of one of the oldest cultures in the world. Almost 18 per cent of Western Australians speak a language other than English at home.

The McGowan government recognises the importance and value of the diversity of languages spoken in this state, and is committed to maximising the benefits of language maintenance, teaching and learning for the benefit of the whole society. Our linguistic diversity makes us more able to communicate with the rest of the world, and promotes trade, business, academic and cultural exchange. Language diversity also promotes understanding, inclusivity and dialogue within our society. The community languages program, administered through the Office of Multicultural Interests, funds 50 community language schools, as well as an in-school insertion language program.

Western Australian schools and community groups will be holding activities to celebrate International Mother Language Day on 21 February 2018. It will be my pleasure to attend the Bangladesh Australia Association of WA's celebration of the day on Saturday, 24 February.