

HARMONY WEEK

Statement by Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests) [9.11 am]: I advise the house that today is the start of Western Australia's Harmony Week 2018. Harmony Week is a state government initiative that takes place every year from 15 to 21 March. As one of the world's most multicultural nations, Australia's national identity is formed by the rich and ancient cultures of Australia's First Peoples and the many millions of migrants who arrived here over the past two centuries. Harmony Week is an opportunity to get to know our culturally diverse communities and to celebrate and recognise the innumerable benefits that they have brought to Western Australia.

Perhaps not all members will be aware that this is now an Australia-wide initiative in the form of Harmony Day, which started right here in WA. Harmony Day was first launched in 1998 by the Western Australian government and was adopted in 2000 as a national celebration by the Australian government. It was celebrated on 21 March, which is the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. After discussions with peak bodies and community groups, the Western Australian state government realised that holding celebrations on 21 March was misplaced because that date commemorates the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. Therefore, Harmony Day was changed to Harmony Week. The first six days celebrate our diverse cultural heritage and achievements and the final day, 21 March, is a day of reflection. As such, Harmony Week was launched in 2003 and has been a major Western Australian initiative ever since.

Harmony Week is a simple and powerful way of expressing that there is no place for intolerance or disharmony in our multicultural society. This year, community events will be held across the state with \$55 000 in support from the McGowan government through the Office of Multicultural Interests. Events include Bentley Harmony Week, the South West Harmony Festival, the Mandurah Harmony Festival, Mirrabooka Celebrating Harmony Week and Welcome to Three Springs, to name just a few. A schools debate, hosted by the Office of Multicultural Interests, on the question of "Is cultural diversity a threat to the Australian way of life?" will bring together opinions and ideas from both sides of the fence and encourage open and honest dialogue among young people.

I encourage all members of the house to take part in this year's Harmony Week events.