



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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ADJOURNMENT

Harmony Day

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (1.04 am): I rise to speak about Harmony Day 2017. Every year on 21 March in Australia we celebrate the diversity of our great country. It is a day that celebrates cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home and aims to engage with people to encourage them to participate in their local communities, to respect cultural and religious diversity and to foster a sense of belonging for everyone. Harmony Day was launched in 1999—some 18 years ago—and since then more than 70,000 Harmony Day events have been held across the nation, embracing the message that everyone belongs.

We are blessed to have one of the oldest continuous cultures through our first people, which is strengthened and enhanced by the vibrancy and diversity of our newest arrivals from around the world. Australia is undeniably rich in cultural heritage. Around 45 per cent of Australians were born overseas or have at least one parent who was. We have a mixed ancestry, with more than 7.5 million people migrating to Australia since the end of the World War II. As a result, apart from English, it would not be surprising to meet someone who can speak Mandarin, Italian, Arabic, Cantonese, Greek, Vietnamese, Filipino, Spanish or Hindi living in Australia. In addition, Australia is fortunate to have retained more than 60 Indigenous languages.

Our cultural diversity is what makes Australia unique. It is part of our national identity. As the LNP shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships and multicultural affairs, I have been fortunate to meet with a large number of people from many corners of our multicultural society. Recently, I met with leaders from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Brisbane, the Cypriot Community Association of Queensland, the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, the German Australian Community Centre Queensland, the Hong Kong Association of Queensland, the Punjabi Cultural Association of Queensland and many others. I am also a proud supporter and chairman of the Parliamentary Friends of Israel and host two functions here at Parliament House each year during a sitting week.

Furthermore, just over a week ago I had the privilege of attending the official opening of the Brisbane International Arts Festival, which celebrates Harmony Week. This wonderful event delighted guests with a number of beautiful multicultural performances at the Calamvale community centre. A special thankyou must be made to President Maggie Lu, Life Honorary President Melody Chen, Life Honorary Adviser Lewis Lee OAM and all the team at World Arts and Multi-Culture Inc. for putting on such a wonderful event. The enthusiasm and effort by so many of Queensland's multicultural groups is a testament to the love and passion they all have for living in this great country. I am proud to be the shadow minister for this great portfolio and I look forward to continuing to meet with many more representatives.