




Speech By
Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Record of Proceedings, 28 February 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

International Mother Language Day

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.50 am): 'We ca mouth wedhia'. Good morning to you and my colleagues in the Dinka language of some of our Queenslanders of South Sudanese background. I draw to the attention of the House that last Thursday, 21 February was the United Nations International Mother Language Day, as the Premier has mentioned. International Mother Language Day was approved in 1999 at the UNESCO General Conference and has been globally observed since 2000. The date of 21 February acknowledges the day in 1952 that several people were killed fighting to have the Bangla language recognised.

International Mother Language Day promotes linguistic diversity as a vehicle for understanding, appreciating difference and preserving cultures. To highlight this point, last Saturday I was a guest, along with the member for Ipswich, at the 2019 Dinka Bor community event, where mother language, dance and food were shared to celebrate their traditions and encourage and include their Queensland born children in their cultural heritage.

There is no greater demonstration of the Queensland government's commitment to fully embracing the cultural make-up of Queensland than the Multicultural Recognition Act 2016. This act acknowledges that a diverse, dynamic and cohesive society will deliver benefits for all Queenslanders—community, government and business sectors alike. I call on members to continue to appreciate the importance and beauty of the many languages spoken by Queenslanders, acknowledging that more than 11 per cent of Queenslanders speak a language other than English at home and 1.6 per cent do not speak English or do not speak it well.

Supporting mother languages is an important part of openly demonstrating respect for Queensland's cultural diversity. This respect must include all Queenslanders and ensure they have fair and equal access to services and opportunities, a principle also embedded in the Multicultural Queensland Charter.

As noted by the Deputy Premier in her ministerial statement, in Queensland over a hundred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and dialects were once spoken. Today around 50 of these remain spoken in varying degrees, with fewer than 20 being used as first languages, predominantly in the north of the state. Let us respect the diversity of our wonderful state by continuing to encourage multilingual communication, a democratic right that people around the world, including in our own country, are working very hard to preserve.