

and our priorities reflect our community's progressive values, and we will continue to deliver the reforms and investments that benefit all Canberrans.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

International Mother Language Day

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.58): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) in 1999, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization proclaimed annual observance of International Mother Language Day on 21 February;
- (b) that about 170 languages are spoken in Canberra;
- (c) the significance of preserving Indigenous languages as a link to Indigenous culture and histories and as an expression of identity;
- (d) the place of language instruction in government and non-government schools and in other organisations such as the 40 community language schools in the ACT;
- (e) the social, cultural and economic benefits of multi-lingualism to the ACT and Australia; and
- (f) the encouragement to learning a language other than English contained in the government's ACT Language Policy; and

(2) calls on the ACT government to observe International Mother Language Day in the ACT to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by the people around the world, especially those in Canberra, through:

- (a) establishing collections and displays, sometimes called an "Ekushey Corner", at ACT Libraries to promote and protect mother languages;
- (b) promote the active participation, revitalisation and maintenance of local Indigenous languages;
- (c) supporting the construction of a monument in Canberra dedicated to the mother languages of Australians;
- (d) continuing the ACT Heritage Library's collection of oral history as a means of preserving the multi-lingual inheritance of the ACT; and
- (e) supporting second language instruction in schools.

The Canberra community is a rich tapestry of cultures and languages. We have seen the ACT repeatedly come together and celebrate our multiculturalism through events

such as Ramadan, Diwali, Christmas, the Nara Candle Festival, Chinese New Year and many other similar events. The Canberra Liberals believe that the celebration and observance of International Mother Language Day reinforces the ACT's pledge to create an inclusive community. My motion today outlines actions that I think would further emphasise our territory's commitment to minority languages and, importantly, to the rights of cultural identity.

The Canberra Liberals believe it is vital that our community is deeply connected to our heritage—our heritage both locally and abroad. We in the Canberra Liberals of course recognise this diversity. The Canberra Liberals recognise and represent a Canberra that is multicultural. We recognise the value of languages, and that language is intrinsically linked to culture and the importance of supporting the preservation of languages that are spoken here in Canberra or that were spoken by Canberrans.

Language has been established in the international community as an integral human right under multiple instruments. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

This principle has further been enshrined in our own Human Rights Act, with section 27 asserting that any person who belongs to a linguistic minority must not be denied the right, with other members of the minority, to use their language. When these rights are infringed, it is detrimental to the lingual and cultural community, and the broader social fabric and character of our society.

Passionate political movements have been inspired by language and its foundation as a significant part of cultural identity. The date chosen by UNESCO to observe International Mother Language Day, 21 February, is itself a tribute to the language movement of Bangladesh, and in recognition of this fact I also recognise and pay tribute to members of our Bangladeshi and multicultural community here today.

In 1948 the government of the Dominion of Pakistan declared Urdu as the sole national language of the East Bengal province, now known as Bangladesh. The Bengali-speaking people made up the majority of the population, and rose in opposition to defend their language and culture. Protests were held, with the movement reaching a climax on 21 February 1952, when student protesters were killed by police.

In 1956 the constitution of Pakistan was amended to include Bengali as an official language, a direct response to the perseverance of the language movement by the Bangladeshi people. In Bangladesh, Language Movement Day, 21 February, is now observed as a national holiday, commemorating the defenders of their language and their identity. It demonstrates the powerful relationship people have with their language, and the Canberra Liberals believe that the ACT government should support that identity, too.

The relationship between language and culture is also demonstrated in our own Indigenous community. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a deep spiritual connection to the land, and that closeness is further expressed through each group's unique language and dialect. The passing down of oral history has long been an essential tenet of Indigenous culture and so many other cultures around the world.

Members of Canberra's Indigenous community are actively working to revitalise the Indigenous language of the Ngunnawal people. The Ngaiyurijja Ngunnawal Language Group and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies are working cooperatively to develop a language program for school students and teachers. ABS statistics show that just over 10 per cent of the ACT's Indigenous population aged 15 and over speak an Indigenous language, which is about half the national average. In contrast, around 70 per cent of the same group identify with a clan, tribal or language group.

The 2017 languages pathway plan in Canberra public schools allows for schools to offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Currently, no public schools have any Indigenous language programs. The Canberra Liberals strongly encourage the ACT government to work with the Indigenous community to take advantage of the unique opportunity to teach Aboriginal languages in schools.

We see the reinforcement of cultural identity and growing linguistic variety in language statistics. Currently, over 170 different languages are spoken throughout the ACT. In 2011, 18 per cent of Canberrans, nearly 65,000 people, spoke a language other than English at home. The recent census reveals that that number has increased to 22 per cent, slowly closing in on a quarter of our population. There are around 11,000 people who speak Mandarin and Cantonese in the ACT; 3,800 Vietnamese speakers; 3,300 Italian speakers; and thousands more who speak Spanish, Greek, Arabic, Croatian, German, Bengali and many others.

The assortment of languages spoken in the territory is increasing every year. The fastest growing languages within Canberra are: Karen, Malayalam, Nepali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Teluga, Afrikaans, Dinka, Shona and Urdu. With each passing year, our society is growing more multilingual, providing an opportunity for the ACT government to support these ever-expanding communities.

While language binds us, it can also be an obstacle. Nearly two per cent of Canberrans do not speak English well. In my own electorate, the Gungahlin region reported 28 per cent of people having difficulty communicating in English, the highest proportion in the territory. The ACT language policy includes a specific policy aim:

That English language programs are readily available to Canberrans who wish to learn the English language.

The policy summarises it by saying:

Learning English is a key tool for empowering all Canberrans to fully participate in all aspects of community life.

It is imperative that these courses are available to support social cohesion throughout the territory.

Where there is a language barrier, the contribution of interpreters cannot be understated. Interpreters for those who do not speak English well, and for those in the deaf community, perform an invaluable service. From something as simple as paying a bill to something as complex as consent to a major medical procedure, interpreters assist others to engage with their world. Not only do interpreters bridge a lingual divide; they must also contextualise cultural differences to be effective communicators. Interpreters provide a conduit for others to share in the community, and help guarantee that an individual's rights are not compromised by an inability to communicate. Of course, often interpreters are formalised, but so often it is informal support provided by family members.

Learning and speaking a different language involves developing intercultural skills and an understanding of diversity. The 2016 census data revealed that over 45 per cent of Canberrans had one or both parents born overseas. In this increasingly globalised society, it is important that we equip the next generation with the skills to enable them to communicate with a diverse set of people.

We have seen our education system already begin to adapt to meet new lingual challenges, with three schools in the ACT offering a bilingual language program: Mawson Primary School, in Mandarin; Telopea Park, in French; and Yarralumla Primary School, in Italian. This is in addition to the curriculum requirements in the ACT public schools policy 2009 which requires all Canberra public schools to provide a language program for a minimum specified time in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese or Korean. These eight languages are being taught throughout the territory, as well as Latin and Hindi. The learning of a language other than English is further encouraged under the ACT language policy. The Canberra Liberals support this investment in our children's futures, and we also support the possible expansion of these eight languages.

The benefits of being bilingual or multilingual have been demonstrated in countless studies. The individual benefits have been proven to include superior problem-solving skills, better focus and concentration, and even delaying the onset of dementia.

This motion calls on the government to continue utilising the ACT Heritage Library's oral history recording resources to preserve the multilingual inheritance of the ACT. History is recorded in many mother tongues, and each forms part of our cultural heritage and our cultural identity. It is important that we preserve the oral histories of our community in the language which reflects their experience and their culture. In line with the ACT language policy, every effort should be made to preserve the oral histories of our Indigenous community, the foundation of our past.

Another way for the ACT government to encourage social inclusion is the establishment of collections and displays in ACT libraries to promote and protect mother languages. These collections and displays, sometimes referred to as an Ekushey corner, contribute to the promotion and protection of mother languages

within our diverse community. The Canberra Liberals support our community's right to have their language preserved in our library system, and we encourage the government to put this in place.

The Canberra Liberals also support the construction of a monument in Canberra dedicated to mother languages spoken here in Australia. Such a monument would encourage social cohesion through the shared recognition of language rights held by each individual and member of our community. Much like the Shaheed Minar erected by the Bangladeshi language movement, it would stand as a tribute to the emotions inspired by language and its central position within cultural identity.

In conclusion, as the effects of globalisation become further embedded in our society, we see evidence of growing multilingualism in Canberra. The Canberra Liberals believe the observance of International Mother Language Day underpins the territory's commitment to an inclusive community. My motion today proposes a variety of ways in which the ACT government can support communities in celebrating their language and their culture. As demonstrated through the language movement in Bangladesh, language evokes considerable sentiment and is at the heart of cultural identity. While the ACT community does communicate in many dialects, we are all one community and we speak with one voice on the importance of mother languages.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (11.12), by leave: I move the three amendments that have been circulated in my name:

- (1) In paragraph (1)(f), omit "the encouragement to learning a language other than English contained in the Government's ACT Language Policy", substitute "that the Government's ACT Languages Policy encourages the learning of a language other than English".
- (2) In paragraph (2)(b), omit "promote", substitute "promoting".
- (3) In paragraph (2)(c), omit "supporting the construction of", substitute "exploring options to support the construction of".

I am pleased to rise today to speak on the topic of mother languages. The languages we use to communicate are the basis of our social connectedness and cohesion in whatever form they may take. Be it in a workplace, school classroom, around the family dinner table or at the bus stop, our unique forms of communication actually serve to unite us. Indeed, in the ACT we speak more than 170 languages in our homes, workplaces and social settings.

The ACT government is committed to preserving and promoting the unique diversity of languages spoken in the territory, and especially those of our nation's first people. Therefore, today, we reaffirm our pledge that on 21 February each year we will honour and celebrate the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's annual observance of International Mother Language Day.

I was honoured to attend the mother language walk earlier this year and reflect on the importance of mother languages and also pay tribute to the proud speakers of Bangla who lost their lives in defence of their right to use and preserve their language. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I acknowledge the members of the community who are here today. As the Leader of the Opposition has outlined, the events of 21 February 1952 and the sacrifice made by six protesters are the inspiration behind the modern-day International Mother Language Movement.

Canberra is a vibrant, multilingual city. One in five Canberrans speak a language other than English at home. Our diversity of language has become part of the development of our community as a whole. Many languages are on offer to be learned and used by Canberrans who are interested in them, as well as those who are historically and culturally connected to them.

A range of languages and cultures serve to widen our daily experiences and thinking, increasing our knowledge and cultural engagement. It is in this context that the ACT government, through the Community Services Directorate, is in the process of extensive community consultation to review and update Many Voices, the ACT languages policy. Once completed, this revised policy will take our city forward into the next decade, feeding into the frameworks and strategies that govern our approach to cultural diversity and augmenting what is also being done in other jurisdictions across the nation.

Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage, and we as a government, and indeed as a community, know this and work in many ways to ensure the diversity of languages is maintained and enhanced. I would like to turn my attention to some of the ways in which we do this. The ACT government provides a range of grants to promote and provide access to multilingualism through, for example, locally produced radio programs and the funding and support of organisations such as the ACT Community Languages School Association.

The association is the peak community organisation for community-based language schools in the ACT and currently has a membership of 50 language schools, with four language-based playgroups, 360 teachers and 2½ thousand students learning 36 different languages. We are proud to support the association with recurrent funding of more \$170,000 each year to ensure that children across the ACT can learn the languages of their cultural heritage and indeed other languages which intrigue them. I was pleased recently to support an increase in funding for the association and I was sorry to miss their annual dinner last weekend. But I understand that Ms Orr, who represented the government, greatly enjoyed the occasion.

Of particular note, a priority area for the ACT government is the preservation and promotion of the myriad Indigenous languages spoken by members of our community. The theme of this year's NAIDOC Week was "Our languages matter", which aimed to increase, emphasise and celebrate the unique and essential role that Indigenous languages play in cultural identity, linking people to their land and water, and in the transmission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, spirituality and rights through story and song.

By way of context, some 250 distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, with over 600 dialects, covered the continent in the late 18th century. Of these, 145 languages are spoken in Australia today. One hundred and ten of those are considered endangered, and only 60 Aboriginal languages are considered truly alive and in use as a first tongue today. A total of 10 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians identify as speaking an Indigenous language at home. That means there are almost 64,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who speak an Indigenous language within their families and communities. As I said during NAIDOC Week and reaffirm now, we must work together and treasure those remaining languages.

The ACT has three major languages spoken within the region: Ngunnawal, Wolgalu and Ngarigu. There have also been a number of other dialects identified. Through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-18, under the focus area “cultural identity”, the “strong cultural Identity” and “feeling empowered to promote their identity at home, at work and in their communities” are two actions that mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are comfortable to identity and practise culture through language.

Cultural heritage and knowledge is passed on throughout each generation by language. As such, language is integral in affirming and maintaining wellbeing, self-esteem and a strong sense of identity. Languages contain complex understandings of a person’s culture and their connection with their land.

In 2012 the United Nations held a forum on the study of the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of Indigenous peoples. The importance of language is summed up in the following quote from that forum:

Language is an essential part of, and intrinsically linked to, Indigenous peoples’ ways of life, culture and identities. Languages embody many Indigenous values and concepts and contain Indigenous peoples’ histories and development. They are fundamental markers of Indigenous peoples’ distinctiveness and cohesiveness as peoples.

To be able to teach an Indigenous language there is often a need to reconstruct it, as most language, as I have said, on the eastern seaboard of Australia was lost. As Aboriginal people were banned from speaking their language due to previous government policies, the languages disappeared. The ANU has been successful in progressing this work locally, through the linguistics faculty and the work of Dr Harold Koch and others.

As the Leader of the Opposition noted, AIATSIS, a gem we should be very proud to have hosted in our national capital here in the ACT, has been working with local traditional custodians who have been reviving the Ngunnawal language and teaching it to others. We applaud their efforts and continue to promote and value the learning and use of mother languages in our diverse and inclusive community.

Another way the ACT government works to preserve and protect the languages of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities is through our library services across

the city. Libraries ACT has long celebrated and encouraged the preservation of languages and has offered language resources to the community since the 1980s. Each year Libraries ACT celebrates International Mother Language Day, and this year acknowledged the day through a special story time with guest presenter Glenn Freeman from the Koomurri Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation. There were displays and encouragement to borrow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander books. Glenn shared the local story of why the emu cannot fly and taught participating children and their carers Ngunnawal words and the rhyme *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in Ngunnawal language.

More broadly, and in line with the standards and guidelines from the Australian Library and Information Association and the International Federation of Library Associations, Libraries ACT provides extensive resources for our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The collections in our library include material in approximately 30 languages from across the globe, in varying quantities, with formats such as bilingual picture books, novels, DVDs, music, newspapers and magazines. In addition, Libraries ACT offers programs throughout the year such as advice for parents about sharing languages with their children and bilingual story times, and participates with a stall at the annual National Multicultural Festival.

A special initiative of the ACT Heritage Library which I would like to highlight in particular is the loaning of recording equipment to community groups and individuals to record oral histories in their mother tongue as well as English. In return, copies of the oral histories are deposited with the ACT Heritage Library. The ACT Heritage Library receives the products of all ACT heritage grants from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, including oral history recordings. Many oral history collections refer to the cultural diversity of Canberra, in particular the Italians at the Blue Range hut during World War II and the 1955 project of interviews with representatives of our most populous migrant groups in 1955. What a wonderful resource for our community into the future!

Now that we have a wide range of multicultural communities reflected in our diverse city, it is important that we recognise and share with them the unique nature of their mother tongues and the importance to them of learning and sharing their cultural identity through language.

I proposed a number of amendments to today's motion. The most significant of those relates to exploring options to support the construction of a monument in Canberra dedicated to the mother languages of Australians. The reason for this amendment is to express the ACT government's support to explore these options but to understand that it may not be the ACT government solely that has responsibility for completing this endeavour, depending on where the monument might be located. Of course, we may have to work with the National Capital Authority and there may be support for private sector contributions to the development of such a monument, as there has been with other monuments in the past.

In closing, I do hope that Canberrans, no matter what their mother tongue, hear this message too so that the language they speak in their homes, in social settings and in

their workplaces with their families and loved ones and colleagues truly contributes to and enhances our multilingual, multicultural, diverse way of life in this city.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.24): I am pleased to rise to speak on the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity, including through the preservation and promotion of mother languages. The ACT Greens believe that cultural and linguistic diversity in the ACT population greatly enriches our community and should be embraced and celebrated. Our diversity is a source of our strength and a key part of what makes the ACT such a vibrant place to live.

I am proud that the ACT was the first jurisdiction in Australia to enact a Human Rights Act, providing an explicit statutory basis for the human rights which are universal and enjoyed by everyone in our community regardless of gender, religious belief, nationality, race or any other point of difference. These rights include freedom of expression and the rights of minorities to enjoy their culture.

Under the Human Rights Act, anyone who belongs to an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority must not be denied the right, with other members of the minority, to enjoy his or her culture, to declare and practise his or her religion, or to use his or her language. Additionally, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their languages and knowledge.

According to the latest census data, around 24 per cent of ACT households speak a language other than English at home. The languages most commonly spoken include Mandarin, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Hindi and Spanish, with these representing just a fraction of the diversity that exists in our community. As the motion notes, there are around 170 languages spoken across Canberra. This is hardly surprising, noting that 32 per cent of people in the ACT were born overseas. But it does reinforce that there is a need for governments to support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to fully participate in our society and actively engage in our democracy.

As the motion notes, UNESCO celebrates International Mother Language Day on 21 February each year. This year's theme focused on the importance of multilingual education, ensuring that learners have access to education in their mother tongue and in other languages. It is through our mother language that most people acquire the essential skills of reading, writing and numeracy. In addition, local languages, especially minority and Indigenous languages, transmit cultures, values and traditional knowledge.

In 1788, at the time of European settlement of this continent, over 250 Indigenous Australian language groups existed across the nation. Today only around 120 of those languages are still spoken and many are at risk of being lost as elders pass away. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular, language is more than just a way to communicate. It plays a central role in a person's sense of identity and is also the vehicle within which much cultural knowledge, such as songs, bush tucker and traditional medicine, is stored.

Sadly, throughout our national history we have not always recognised the importance of mother languages to Indigenous peoples. From the earliest days of European contact there was often an assumption that Indigenous Australian languages were of less value than English, and this view was reinforced through government policy, education and employment practices. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were discouraged from speaking their languages and made to feel ashamed of using them in public.

As the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, or AIATSIS, has articulated, the impact of this was that the link between generations of speakers was broken so that many children had little or no knowledge of their traditional languages. Their parents were partial speakers and their grandparents were the remaining few speakers of a language that, as the elders, they alone could pass down to the next generation.

Thankfully, today that is starting to change, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia speaking about the need to protect, preserve and strengthen traditional languages. Through the second national Indigenous languages survey, conducted in 2014, Indigenous people said that they believe traditional languages should be taught in schools and that the use of traditional languages in schools helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to succeed. Respondents to the survey held an almost unanimous view that connecting with and learning about language has a powerfully beneficial effect on people's wellbeing.

Here in the ACT, as has been noted earlier, there is a fantastic project underway with the Ngaiyurijja Ngunnawal Language Group and AIATSIS working together collaboratively on a research project to revitalise the Ngunnawal language. I understand the aim is to revive a fully functional language that can also be part of the local school curriculum, with AIATSIS linguists and group members having been painstakingly compiling a wordlist since July 2014. This is a really exciting and important project for Ngunnawal people and all people across the ACT. We know that bilingualism and multilingualism are important ways to strengthen intercultural understanding in our community. I look forward to seeing this resource develop and I support its use to improve knowledge and understanding of Ngunnawal culture across our ACT community.

Of course, multilingualism and the recognition of mother language are equally important for people from migrant communities. As I mentioned earlier, we know that Canberra is an extremely diverse place, with many people from many different multicultural backgrounds. In particular, I am proud that the ACT is the only state or territory jurisdiction in Australia to be declared a refugee welcome zone. Our support for protecting and promoting mother languages is an important part of what we can do to make the ACT a safe and welcoming place for asylum seekers and refugees, as well as other migrants.

We are also lucky to have over 50 community language schools operating across Canberra. These schools help people to connect with their own or other cultural backgrounds, promote understanding and mutual respect among ethnic communities

and teach languages, history and culture to their students. At the last election the ACT Greens called for additional funding for our community language schools, since current funding has not been adjusted to reflect increasing numbers of students and rising administrative costs. While it is great to see more students utilising our community language schools, it is important that funding continues to keep up with demand. This is one practical way the government can actively support the promotion of mother languages and language training in the territory.

Mr Coe's motion makes mention of a number of other ways that mother languages can be supported, including through promotion in ACT libraries and, in particular, the preservation of the ACT Heritage Library's oral histories collection. These are programs that will benefit our community, and the Greens are pleased to support them through this motion. I am interested to hear more about the concept behind the proposal for a monument in Canberra dedicated to mother languages. We are certainly happy to support Minister Stephen-Smith's amendment to explore options for this concept, noting that further details about the design and location of such a monument would need to be considered. We welcome input from the community on that process.

In concluding, the ACT Greens want culturally and linguistically diverse communities to be engaged and connected with the broader Canberra community, as well as supported to build networks within their own communities. We support community programs to foster harmony and social cohesion and programs to preserve and protect languages, making an important contribution to that goal. I thank Mr Coe for bringing this motion forward today and for providing an opportunity to celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity through this discussion. The Greens are pleased to support the motion and Minister Stephen-Smith's amendment.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.32): It seems only right that I very briefly address this motion in my mother language.

Mrs Kikkert then spoke in Tongan.

Translation: I am very glad for the opportunity to be here with you this morning to discuss this important issue. I was born in Tonga; I spoke Tongan growing up. My Tongan language is a blessing to me. I would like to thank Alistair Coe for supporting this issue and bringing it up for us to discuss.

I am, in fact, one of three Liberal MLAs in this Assembly whose mother tongue is not English. This means that, when Mr Coe and the rest of the Canberra Liberals speak up about the significance of first languages and the importance of maintaining and celebrating mother languages, we are not merely speaking about other people; we are speaking from a position informed by personal experience.

My first language is incredibly important to me. It forms an essential part of my identity. As linguists, anthropologists and other scholars have repeatedly pointed out, language is closely tied to both culture and identity. Languages serve as libraries of cultural knowledge as well as enabling the transference of that knowledge across generations. The language we first learn as infants is embedded with places, histories, spiritual beliefs and family systems, just to name a few, and it frames how we see and

understand our world. To this day there are things that I understand in Tongan that I just do not know how to understand in any other language.

International Mother Language Day, which this motion calls upon the ACT government to observe, has its origins in the Bengali language movement. When the government of Pakistan ordained Urdu as the sole national language on 23 February 1948, extensive protests broke out among the Bangla-speaking majority of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The government attempted to suppress discontent by outlawing public meetings and rallies, but the movement could not be stopped and a protest on 21 February 1952 turned deadly when police fired upon and killed a number of protesters.

Some people might argue that a language is a trivial thing to be willing to die for, but I understand. For the people of East Pakistan, this was not just about their language but about the culture embedded in that language and about their sense of who they were as a people. To be robbed of Bangla was to be robbed of their identity and their values—their way of seeing and understanding themselves and the world around them.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to join with Canberra's vibrant Mon refugee community in celebrating their national day. They too understand the relationships among language, culture and identity. One of the main tools that the Burman military rulers used strategically to attempt to strip the Mon people living in Burma of their identity was the banning of their language in schools and in print. For decades these brave people have resisted by forming literature and culture organisations in every Mon village, and in the past few years the restrictions on Mon publications finally appear to have been loosened.

In this motion, the importance of learning and speaking English competently for all Australians is not disputed, but it is important to emphasise that Australia is not a monolingual society. People often speak English at work or at school and a completely different language at home or in their place of worship. According to the latest census, almost 22 per cent of ACT households speak a language other than English. We should do all we can to celebrate and encourage this great linguistic diversity and its important role in supporting and facilitating genuine cultural diversity.

Access to different languages brings with it access to different ideas, different ways of seeing the world, and different ways of thinking and being. I want my children to have access to this richness and so have encouraged them to participate in Tongan language school.

This past Saturday, the ACT Community Language Schools Association held an annual dinner to celebrate all of the languages currently taught by its 50 school members. These include Arabic, Bangla, Cantonese, Croatian, Dutch, Filipino, Finnish, Greek, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Karen, Khmer, Korean, Macedonian, Mandarin, Maori, Mon, Japanese, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Sinhalese, Spanish, Swedish, Tamil, Tongan and Vietnamese. How great is this?

In 1999 UNESCO proclaimed 21 February as International Mother Language Day. In February this year it was my privilege to gather with other non-native speakers of English and those who support linguistic diversity to participate in the International Mother Language Day walk. We met up under the international flags along Queen Elizabeth Terrace and proceeded together to Stage 88 in Commonwealth Park. As fantastic as this event was, it would be good for us here in Canberra to formally observe this day as a means of promoting and protecting all languages used in our territory.

I wholeheartedly endorse this motion by Mr Coe, along with its attendant recommendations, including supporting second language instruction in schools, promoting and revitalising the use of local Indigenous languages, supporting the construction of a monument and utilising libraries to further these worthy goals. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

Mrs Kikkert then spoke in Tongan.

Translation: *Many thanks.*

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.40): I thank Mr Coe for bringing forward this important motion. I want to talk today about the importance of the recognition of their language to the Indigenous community, why it is important to work towards the revitalisation and maintenance of their language and why we need to include it for second language instruction in our schools. I begin by acknowledging that this year is in fact the year for Indigenous language recognition. The 2017 national NAIDOC Week theme was “Our languages matter”. Throughout Australia during July we were reminded of the importance, resilience and richness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Why are languages so important to the Indigenous peoples? They matter as they are a primary way to safeguard and preserve their cultural identity. Language links Indigenous people to their land and water, which is in an expression of their cultural identity and assists with the transmission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, spirituality and rites through their stories and songs. So it is vital that we consider again the significance of preserving that language, and that we work towards its preservation, revitalisation and maintenance.

There are several local languages and dialects in Canberra, one of which is the Ngunnawal language. In a visit to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, I was interested to learn of the work being carried out to preserve this language. The revitalisation of the Ngunnawal language has formed a major project for the institute since 2014. The institute has been working closely with several Indigenous families and corporations to not only revitalise the language but also develop a language program for primary schools. But I am told that the work has stalled. I call on the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to move beyond the tokenism that is so often associated with the actions of this government in this space, to promote and support the revitalisation project both financially and through active facilitation.

Why is it that supporting their language is so important? Indigenous communities maintain their cultural heritage by passing on their knowledge from one generation to the next, through speaking and teaching their languages. They identify themselves through their connection to their country, through their relationship to each other and through their language and stories. Language then becomes an important part of maintaining those connections to culture. Yet recent statistics from the NATSIS survey showed that only 26 per cent of Indigenous children in areas such as Canberra spoke an Indigenous language, and sometimes this was only a few words.

The same survey states that to make a difference in educational, employment and training outcomes, and to lower engagement with high-risk and antisocial behaviours, Indigenous children need to be connected to their community, their culture and so, most importantly, to their local language. Particularly in the early years of a child's life, the investment in culture is critically important. It provides children—and their families and communities—with social and emotional benefits. There was evidence that this investment strengthened communities, bridged cultural divides, fostered resilience and contributed to reconciliation—all the necessary attributes that lead to closing the gap and improving outcomes for Indigenous communities.

In 2015 the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies worked with Indigenous leaders and the primary school in Fraser to run a pilot program of teaching the Ngunnawal language to preschool children. It would be great to see this project continue, for the government to sponsor the creation of local language dictionaries in Ngunnawal, Walgalu and Ngarigo. It would be great to see the development of children's books in all the Indigenous languages in ACT schools.

The work here in the ACT is only in its infancy. Seeing the large collection of artefacts, books, stories and songs in the Pitjantjatjara language at the National Museum, and knowing that there are summer schools that anyone can attend to learn this language, it would be great to see that here in the ACT. It would be terrific if the revitalisation of the mother languages of the local Indigenous people could lead to the teaching of them in the ACT as a second language, alongside the more traditional European and Asian languages. I therefore call on the government to support the active participation, revitalisation and maintenance of the local Indigenous languages for future inclusion as a second language option for schoolchildren.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (11.45): I thank Mr Coe for bringing this motion to the Assembly today and giving us a chance to talk about our inclusive Canberra. I also thank the Minister for Multicultural Affairs for outlining the importance of and support for our city's multilingual way of life.

Canberra has a really great record as being an inclusive and vibrant community which is deeply connected by our value of diversity. The government's support of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's proclamation of 21 February each year as International Mother

Language Day is firmly enshrined. I know that there were a couple of members of the Assembly who joined in the Mother Language Day walk recently. I have been on walks in the past supporting Mother Language Day and I think it is a great way to celebrate our city's continued diversity and support for mother languages.

During this year's annual National Multicultural Festival in February the government funded community organisations such as the International Mother Language Movement through the participation multicultural grants program to promote mother languages to the more than 280,000 people who attended the three-day festival. The festival of course is a shining light each year and the pinnacle celebration of cultural wealth in the Canberra community.

The diversity and inclusiveness of our city makes it a welcoming and interesting place to live and work; something we are all very proud of. It has also made Canberra's Multicultural Festival a growing attraction for many thousands of domestic and international visitors that we welcome each year, as well as those who come to the capital from other states who are looking for a fresh start.

During the 2011 census, 37 per cent of the ACT population reported either being born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas. Seventeen per cent were born in a non-English-speaking country, which is up from 14 per cent in 2006. So it is very important that we continue to support and create opportunities for individuals to explore and engage with languages tied to their personal cultural heritage, as well as those unfamiliar to them, and it makes good economic sense as well.

An important area that will be explored as part of the impending review of Many Voices, the ACT language policy—which I understand has been outlined by Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith—will be how languages impact on economic development in our city. There is broad recognition of the economic benefit from knowledge of other languages and cultures, as well as strong translating and interpreting skills. This is particularly true in our jurisdiction, where there is an increased economic reliance on tourism, global markets, trade and international education.

Our community is home to more than 100 embassies and high commissions and comprises individuals who hail from over 200 different countries. The government will continue to work closely alongside multicultural community leaders and members and of course the new ACT Multicultural Advisory Council to further formulate and revise this important policy which governs and values our city's language wealth.

Our government's central goal for social inclusion is to help every person reach their potential as a member of our diverse, inclusive and creative community, including through the protection of mother languages and access to services and programs to speak one of our country's languages, English. That central goal for social inclusion and the preservation of language and cultural heritage is particularly imperative when we refer to the very important and significant contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

But it is not only about the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberra residents; it is about celebrating and learning what it means to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in our city. Through ACT public schools there is a swathe of programs and initiatives which teach the broader school population about the precious languages and the culture of the nation's first peoples, as well as programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This support strongly extends to the revitalisation and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, in particular Ngunnawal and other local region languages. It is important to understand that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages cannot be taught in isolation. In order for students to have a full and deep understanding, languages need to be taught alongside local culture and knowledge.

ACT schools are promoting the incorporation of Indigenous languages in teaching and learning programs. This includes resources promoting the 2017 NAIDOC Week theme, "Our languages matter". A new and important initiative in this space centres on the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies developing an Indigenous language and culture course. The focus of this course is Indigenous languages and culture of the Canberra region, including Jervis Bay. In addition, the course will examine language and culture outside of the region. Course development will begin next month, and it is envisaged that the course will be accredited and available for delivery in 2019. The Education Directorate has also implemented several programs and projects dedicated to promoting and building teacher capacity to incorporate Indigenous languages.

Earlier this year six schools participated in a pilot program to incorporate a biographical DVD *Aunty Agnes: Footprints on Our Land* in professional learning and classroom activities. The pilot included several workshops and the development of school-based projects to support learning and teaching activities in ACT public schools. In addition, four primary schools are participating in a curriculum project exploring ways in which to incorporate the Ngunnawal story *Mununja the Butterfly* into learning activities and programs for upper primary students. *Mununja* is a bilingual text enabling students to experience a little of the Ngunnawal language and culture.

The directorate has also been working to strengthen the environment of cultural integrity in all ACT public schools, as part of the student resource allocation. Through this initiative approximately 100 students are participating in learning programs using the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Concurrently all ACT public schools provide a language program in at least one of the eight priority languages: Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Right now, approximately 28,711 Canberra public school students are learning a language. The number has increased from 17,594 students since 2008. In 2017 a total of 17,638 students are studying priority Asian languages. In 2017 a total of 10,832 students are studying priority European languages. Just last year there was an increase of 2,121 students studying a language in Canberra public schools due to the concerted effort of the government and public schools to increase participation rates in language courses. With more than 170 languages spoken in homes and workplaces

across our capital, Canberra truly is the embodiment of a global city and the government will continue to cement that status from the kindergarten classroom up, with our youngest Canberrans learning how to embrace our diversity and speak for themselves and others in a multilingual world.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (11.53): Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker.

Ms Lee then spoke in Korean.

Translation: The journey that I've taken to get to where I am today has been at times challenging and at times joyful. Most importantly, I've learnt a lot along the way.

I was born in Gwangju, in the Republic of Korea, and Korean is my first language, my mother language. My first words were “omma”—“mum”—and “appa”—“dad.” So even in different cultures, something that we, as the human race, have in common is that most of us will claim “mum” and “dad” as our first words.

In preparing to migrate to Australia in 1986, when I was seven and my sister was five, my parents started to teach us English so that we could have a head start in settling into Australia. They put up wallpaper containing the alphabet in our room, and each evening we would sing the alphabet song and say simple phrases like “Mama, goodnight,” and “Goodnight, Papa”.

My parents knew very little English. They attended adult English school for the first month or so, but, because they had a young family to feed, they started working pretty much immediately. My parents will never master English. When you move to a foreign country well into your 30s, having spoken nothing but Korean, when you do not have a huge amount of formal education, when you do not have the opportunity or the freedom to pursue further education because you are still, at almost 70, working full time in low-paid manual labour to make ends meet, it is impossible to ever bridge that gap. Even after more than 30 years in Australia, Dad will say, “Australian movie star Jack Hughman,” and Mum will call her wrist “hand-neck” because in Korean the word for wrist is “sonmog”, which literally translates as “hand-neck.” But, hey, even non-Koreans can understand that.

Even though he can understand less than half of what he sees, hears or reads in the news, my dad is an avid consumer of Australian public affairs and political news. He makes sure that his work TV is turned on to the 24-hour news channel so that whenever he pops into the staffroom he can catch a glimpse of what is going on. He reads whatever newspaper happens to be in the staffroom every lunchtime and he has his car radio tuned in to a news channel so that he knows what is going on. I can only imagine how hard it is to concentrate that much to capture maybe 20 to 30 per cent of what he sees, reads and hears, but he still does it every day.

My parents' English may be nowhere near good enough to pass an IELTS level, whatever it is, but they are more “Australian” and they contribute more to Australian society than anyone I know. When we first moved to Australia, my parents got us into the habit of writing in a diary in Korean every night. They had the wisdom to realise that English would come naturally to us as we started going to school and making

Aussie friends and as we became more immersed in Australian life, but that it was important we did not forget our first language. Each day, my sister and I would dutifully write our page in neat Korean script about who we had played with at school or the homework we had to do, and, on one occasion, there was excitement because we had purchased our very first microwave. Gradually, these beautifully written Korean pages started to contain one, then two words of English, then a sentence in English, and before too long more than half a page would be in English.

My parents were right. English came naturally to us and today it is the language that I am most comfortable with. But what the habit of writing in a diary in Korean did was to make sure we did not forget our first language. Because we maintained at least this base level of Korean, we were and are able to communicate better with our parents. We are able to appreciate traditional myths and legends from thousands of years ago that resonate with life lessons of today. We are able to contribute to Australian multicultural society in a way that allows Aussies from a Western background to see that Asian Aussies have a lot to contribute to making Australia great. We are able to preserve the unique language created by King Sejong of the Joseong dynasty in the 1400s that gave us the ability to speak our own tongue, the language of my ancestors, that I can pass on to the next generation.

Learning a second language has enormous benefits, not just to the person learning it but to our society and our economy. UNESCO's Mother Language Day is celebrated on 21 February because "language is fundamental to communication of all kinds, and it is communication that makes change and development possible in human society".

We live in a global world that is connected more than ever, and whilst it can be easy for Canberrans who speak only English—which, according to the 2016 census, was over 70 per cent—to take for granted that they speak the generally accepted international language, there is a lot that these Canberrans can gain from learning a second language. If they do, it does not mean they will forget their mother language; it means they will learn a new way of communicating with the world and they will learn to value and respect their own mother language.

I love that there are words in Korean which do not quite translate simply into English—words that express an emotion, a feeling, a circumstance or a meaning that does not exist as a word in English. I do not have to look far for some great examples. My Korean name is "Seulgi", which roughly translates to "wisdom" or "to be wise". The Korean name of my middle sister, Rosa, is "Yuighan" which means "fruitful" or "to be of worth". The Korean name of my youngest sister, Sara, is "Saeloun Salm", which means new life or new beginning. This has a particular meaning in my family because Sara was born in Australia when we started a new life here.

The relationship between Korea and Australia is an important one. We have a free trade agreement which has cemented one of the strongest and most complementary economic relationships in our region. Korea is the fourth largest export market for Australian goods and services and in 2016 the Korean market was worth a total of \$32 billion in trade for Australia.

Diversity in language, culture and experiences is only a strength of our community because it is the people, with their shared and diverse cultural experiences and hopes, that make a city a home. I thank the Bangladeshi community for everything that they have done and do for the Canberra community and for being here today. I also thank Mr Coe for bringing this motion to the Assembly and for giving us the opportunity to talk on this important matter in this chamber. I commend his motion to the Assembly.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (12.00): I would like to thank all members of this place for their support for this motion. It is rare that on private members' day we have such support. I do think it is an important issue, and it is a demonstration that this Assembly really does value the multicultural community and, in particular, values the importance of language for our society.

There are a number of people and organisations that I would like to thank. In particular, I would like to thank the Mother Language Conservation Movement, and individuals Nirmal Paul, Enam Hoque, Ajoy Kar, Ignatius Rozario, Victor Matilanca, Dr Ezaz Mamun, Dr Zamir Hussain, Councillor Mohamed Zaman Titu, Councillor Masood Chowdhury, Shawpna Banu Kamrul, Hasan Khan and Pervejul Alam.

I was particularly heartened by the in-principle support that the minister gave for a monument in Canberra. Of course, these things are not easy. These things are always complicated, in terms of making sure that the relevant stakeholders are engaged, including the commonwealth and the National Capital Authority, if it is indeed in that parliamentary zone or in one of the other areas controlled by the commonwealth. I think it is an important demonstration, and I think it is worth the Assembly getting behind. I know the opposition is very keen to work with the government and with other stakeholders in order to get this monument off the ground.

In conclusion, I think mother languages, indeed all languages, are central to the principles of sovereignty. To that end, I think it is so important that we do all we can to recognise the sovereignty of individuals, the sovereignty of culture, and of course the sovereignty of nations. Language is also, as demonstrated in the contributions of Ms Lee and Mrs Kikkert, central to personal identity. It is central to who we are as people. It is, of course, central to our culture, it is central to our community here in Canberra and, above all, I believe it is central to our future. I very much thank all members of the Assembly for their support for this motion and hope that it will lead to some tangible demonstration of this Assembly's and this territory's commitment to mother languages.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Mount Taylor recreation precinct—access

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (12.04): I move:

That this Assembly:

