



Where language and culture come together

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES AUSTRALIA

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WRAP UP

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SPEAK MY LANGUAGE – COMMUNITY LANGUAGES SCHOOLS UNITE TO PROMOTE HARMONY AND LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Victoria's community language schools joined together in launching the *Speak My Language* Campaign to reinforce the importance of languages education, cultural maintenance and social harmony.

Over 40 communities came together at Parliament House on Wednesday February 24, 2016 at an event organised by Community Languages Australia (CLA) as part of the UN International Mother Tongue program.

The program encourages communities to reinforce the importance of language learning by encouraging students, parents and community leaders to focus on the importance of learning a language and maintaining culture.

CLA Executive Director Stefan Romaniw welcomed all present and explained the purpose of the event - *"The challenge that lies before us today is to encourage young families to take on learning a language with their children, Though the Speak My Language program we hope to send a strong message. We must all take responsibility!"*

Prof Mark Rose provided the acknowledgement to country, welcoming everyone on the land of the Wurrunjerrri people *"I welcome you and want to reinforce the message - do not to be complacent. Many indigenous languages have been lost – We all need to work hard in maintaining and in some cases reviving languages"*

Students from Gladstone Park PS sang the National Anthem and other songs to set the mood.

Members of the State School Spectacular also provided entertainment throughout the evening.

The Victorian Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Finance, The Hon Robin Scott addressed those present reinforcing the Andrew's Government support for languages education and cultural maintenance. *"Languages and culture are the soul of a community and we should all commit to ensuring language education prospers. The Andrews' Government is committed to this"*

The Minister for Education James Merlino who attended briefly had previously written to CLA confirming the Andrews' Government support and commitment. (Letter attached)

The State Opposition Multicultural Affairs Spokesperson Inga Peulich MP shared her childhood and professional experiences and offered bipartisan support for languages education in Victoria. She encouraged communities to work hard in promoting languages education. Opposition Leader The Hon Matthew Guy also attended briefly to offer support,

Mike Zafiroopoulos – chair of the *Speak Greek in March* committee relayed the committee's strategies that drove the campaign last year and encouraged communities to do the same.

VMC Chairperson Helen Kapalos spoke of her own experiences and how she is now studying to improve her Greek. Her support is reflected in these words;

“Keeping a language alive is about more than learning text and grammar. It is born of an intrinsic need to preserve our cultural legacy, in the traditions and customs which strengthen our membership to that world... and it plays a huge part in identifying who we are and where we have come from and then placing that meaning in the context of who we are today. It doesn't take away from the other language or languages we speak, it only adds to them, and richly so.”

AFESA Chairperson Tasso Douvartzides made a passionate plea to all - *‘Love your language, keep it close to your heart’* He acknowledged the support of the late Joan Kirner former Premier of Victoria and Minister for Education who believed in community languages and actively worked to promote their recognition.

Steve Dimopoulos Member for Oakleigh provided a word of thanks and set the challenge – *“In 2034 in Oakleigh where I am the local Member wouldn't it be great to see a Greek, Indian, and Asian student sitting at one table speaking Greek, Hindi and Chinese – How great would that be - That is our challenge.”*

A number of new language ambassadors were also introduced. The Love of Language website- www.loveoflanguage.com.au , hosts numerous high profile language ambassadors. It is a powerful tool for teachers, schools, parents and communities to use in encouraging languages education. The new Ambassadors' statements can be viewed on the site. The site is supported by the Department of Education and Training. The DET also provides strong support through the Community Language Schools Program in Victoria.

The *Speak My Language* project builds on the successful *2015 Speak Greek in March* campaign introduced by the Greek community in Victoria.

The event brought together students, community school representatives, leaders and our elected Members to show that language education is alive and well in Victoria, that Government commitment and bipartisan support should give all those who work in the area confidence. The Commonwealth Government through Department of Education and Training also actively supports the national coordination of the CLS program.

The building blocks are in place – We all need to take on shared responsibility to ensure our students are exposed to best practice learning models, provided by teachers and instructors who continuously strive to improve their teaching methods. Communities must play their role and show support for these important educational activities.

The Community Languages School Program is a living, practical example of social harmony. Apart from languages education and cultural maintenance it exposes students, parents, instructors and community leaders to many other cultures. We share, we learn from each other, we support each other – Constantly keeping our eyes on the ball – not the man – Our eyes are on ensuring that language and culture are maintained and used for the benefit of the greater good –Australia.

Further information - Stefan Romaniw 0419531255

Photos from the event <https://goo.gl/photos/ruwoBkqrrjJVN4419>

Attached

- Letter of support from the Minister for Education The Hon James Merlino
- *Speak my Language* – In languages
- Ambassador's presentations - www.loveoflanguage.com.au

- Making the point – video clip shown

Lucy the start of 'I love Lucy' is in a pickle in Paris - she's been accused of using counterfeit notes..... But how can she get out of trouble when she only speaks English? In this hilarious excerpt from the episode her husband Ricky is part of a translation chain: from French to German to Spanish to English and back again....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1xMDn-Btkk>