

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Inc.



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Mrs Ellnor Grassby

Patron
HE Mrs Karin Ehnbohm-Palmquist
Dean of Diplomatic Corps
and Ambassador of Sweden

Chair
Sam Wong AM

ACT Celebration of the United Nations' International Year of Languages at the University of Canberra.

Languages are the gateways to peoples' cultures and should be preserved and nurtured, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, John Hargreaves says. "We are losing around 100 indigenous languages every year, we have to make every effort to preserve and nurture those that remain."

Addressing a politicians' forum during the ACT celebration of the International Year of Languages at the University of Canberra on September 28, Mr Hargreaves said the Government is committed to the mother languages of all who come to the National Capital.

"Many migrant families have great pride in their language and culture but statistics show that on average by the fourth generation the knowledge has gone," he said. "We have to make learning and preserving language interesting and exciting to young people."

This position found bi-partisan support with the Leader of the Opposition, Zed Seselja, saying he had come to Canberra in the late 1960s from Croatia and had grown up speaking both the language of his homeland and English.

"A Liberal Government will support the Ethnic Schools Association with \$206,000 over the next four years because we believe the schools play a valuable role in enriching the culture of Canberra," he said.

Greens candidate for the Legislative Assembly Meredith Hunter said protecting cultural diversity was as important as preserving biodiversity. "The Greens believe the ACT Government should also increase its investment in language teaching in mainstream schools," she said. "More than 60 minutes of teaching a week is needed at primary school level"

The panel discussion was part of a day-long celebration of the languages spoken and being learnt in the ACT region. More than 900 people attended the event, which was jointly organised by the University of Canberra, the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum and the ACT Ethnic Schools Association.

Some 50 displays and workshops provided information and activities about more than 40 languages. Participants could record their 'journey around the world in a day' by having each language they knew or learnt about stamped in specially designed Global Passports.



On the photo are Dr Maria Staykova (secretary of the Bulgarian-Australian Association "Rodina"), Minister John Hargreaves and Katina Novkova (Consul of the Bulgarian Embassy).

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