

ITALIAN COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Motion

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [4.05 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Barnett Government for its cuts to the Italian community language program and the lack of respect shown to the Italian community in Western Australia.

It is with sincere regret that I have to move such a motion in the Parliament of Western Australia because we should not have to move this motion today. This government has turned its back on a key part of the Western Australian community and on a partnership that has benefited the community and the government for decades, and a program that has for decades allowed hundreds of thousands of children to learn a second language. From the outset, I acknowledge everyone in the public gallery this evening—the supporters of the Italian language program and many members of the Italian community. In particular, I acknowledge all the hardworking teachers who have been a key part of the success of this program and who now suffer massive job uncertainties because of this government's decisions.

In my contribution tonight, I will outline why the government should not be cutting the funding to this program. Members on this side intend to keep the debate very tight. This is a serious issue, and I hope and sincerely trust that the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests will stand and provide a response to members on this side of the house. I will say from the outset that I do not want to pit culture versus culture or language versus language. I am a true supporter of multiculturalism. My parents came to Australia in 1952 and 1962 as proud Italian migrants who set a path and created great lives for themselves and for their family. I am a true supporter of multiculturalism and I do not believe culture versus culture or language versus language should ever be pitted against each other. That is not what multiculturalism is about but that is what this government has set about doing. To me, that is the most abhorrent thing that has happened in this debate. The government has tried to turn other cultures and other languages against the Italian culture and language. I want to say from the outset that that is not what a Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests should be doing in today's Australia.

I want to go through some key issues this evening. First, I want to outline the success and the history of this program in Western Australia. I want to go through some issues with the review process, particularly some of the minister's purported outcomes. In question time in this chamber today, the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests told me to go outside my "tribe" on this issue. It was absolutely disgraceful for the minister for multiculturalism to say to someone with an Italian background to go outside their tribe. Members in this Parliament know that I give a lot but I rarely get offended. Members on this side know I rarely get offended, but I was deeply offended by that comment. For the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests to say to someone with an Italian background to go outside her tribe is absolutely deeply offensive.

As I said, I wish to outline some key issues this evening, which are the success and history of the program, the problems of the review process and the false claims. First, I turn to the history and success of the Italian language program that is run by the Italo–Australian Welfare and Cultural Centre, which I will now refer to as Italo. Italo is a not-for-profit organisation that was founded in 1956. It runs insertion and after-hours classes and has a centre in North Perth. Italo first offered Italian as a community language course to government, Catholic and independent schools in 1978. Depending on the schools' decisions, classes were conducted either as insertion or as after-hours classes. Before 1981, the Italo schools program was financed entirely by the Italian community. In 1981 the commonwealth government started funding the ethnic schools program. From 1985, the state government began to fund the program on a per capita basis. Over the years, Italo has been recognised as a strong and professional language class provider. Today the program is serving the Western Australian community well. Italo has had consistently about 22 000 students in the program, with more than 95 per cent of non-Italian origin. This is a key point. This program serves children from both Italian and non-Italian backgrounds. The program is run throughout the state, including in regional Western Australia. More than 60 schools are supported by Italo in the metropolitan area, along with more than 10 regional schools. The program is in its thirty-seventh year, with 86 teachers employed by Italo, and 49 per cent of its courses are for preprimary or year 2. It has been recognised as an excellent provider of language education. There have always been issues about the level of expertise and the degree of professionalism in language schools. It is often very hard to keep to a level of expertise—we know that—but this school has managed to do that, and the teachers are hardworking and committed to offering a second language to our children. Currently, that should be the priority.

I want to go through some of the claims made in the reviews and the reports, and I want to talk about the so-called independent review that this government commissioned last year. Despite claims to the contrary, this program has been reviewed on a number of occasions. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests said today in Parliament that the program has never been reviewed. Within a matter of days, we tracked down a 1999 review of Italian programs in Western Australian government schools. I have in my hand a review that the

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minister said did not exist. The Auditor General assessed this program. The minister and some parts of the media referred to claims of siphoning money, but the Auditor General conducted a review of the grants in 2009. Italo was one of 15 organisations examined by the government at the time, and the Auditor General found that Italo has a range of governance systems in place to properly account for funds. The Auditor General assessed the program and gave it the all clear.

I will talk about the financials. Italo spends approximately \$1.8 million a year to run its Italian community language program. Until 2015, Italo received about \$790 000 from the state government, and the remainder was contributed by the Italian government, the Catholic Education Office and the centre itself. As noted in the review report, the Italian program already receives less than the per capita entitlement of other programs in Western Australia. Twenty thousand students are funded at \$35, and in 2015—this is a key point that we should make—the Italian government is providing around \$260 000 to Italo for this program. It is estimated that the Italian government has committed more than \$10 million over recent years for the teaching of the Italian language in our schools. Given the financial difficulties that the Italian government has faced over recent years, the fact that it has kept that commitment to ensure that language teaching is offered in other countries shows that it is deeply committed to this program. Cuts to the insertion program will see that money ripped away from the Italian government; it will see no commitment from the state government, so why should it commit funds?

It is clear that the program has been a win-win for government and students in Western Australia. It is a professional and high-quality program that avoids issues that have often plagued other languages. The government has partnered with a non-profit community-based organisation. If we tear this down, the infrastructure, whether it be the teachers, the goodwill or the history, will be destroyed and will not be replaced. Once something with so much history is destroyed, it is very difficult to ever replace it.

I want to outline why I believe this was a predetermined decision by this minister, and that this was not the subject of any real review, but rather that this minister set upon this course a number of years ago. Firstly, a decision was made in 2013 to transfer community language education away from the Minister for Education to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. That decision was made without any consultation. The agreement was reached in late 2013. In a draft report that we accessed through freedom of information—I acknowledge the member for Girrawheen, who made the FOI request in relation to this issue—we were able to track what was in the draft report, some of the comments sent by the Office of Multicultural Interests about what was in that draft report, and what was actually in the final report. In one of the draft reports it was claimed that, with the Department of Education facing further budget pressures, and with a reshuffling of ministerial responsibilities, the logical alternative was to transfer responsibility for that program to the Office of Multicultural Interests. That comment was excluded from the final report but, as I said, and as the minister alluded to during question time today, the transfer of this program away from the Department of Education Services to the Office of Multicultural Interests was the first step in a path that the minister has undertaken.

I want to talk about the Erebus review. In 2014, OMI informed the Italo centre and other community language schools that there would be a review. Erebus International was chosen to conduct this review. As I said, through freedom of information we have now seen the original report that was sent to OMI, some subsequent commentary from OMI, and then the final report. Some of the claims being made by the minister such as, “The independent report recommended this”, can be dispelled by the information I will be giving today. I firstly want to outline that it is clear from my reading of a letter from the Department of Education in July last year that the department was very concerned about the cuts to the community language program. I will quote comments made by the Department of Education —

The supply of quality specialist language teachers is an ongoing challenge for schools both at secondary and primary levels. For the teaching of Italian in primary school, this is partially addressed through the contracting of the community-based group, Italo. Therefore, when specialist tuition is not available from within the school, Italo is contracted to supply a specialist Italian Insertion Language Program. In 2013 more than 60 schools were provided with Italian teachers through Italo.

...

The Community Languages Program Funding is currently under review by the State Government. If this review results in a reduction or removal of funding for Italo then Catholic primary schools will not be able to staff the language programs. This will have an immediate and dire impact on the teaching of Italian in Catholic primary schools that will quickly flow through to secondary schools.

It was very clear from this letter from the Department of Education that it saw dire consequences should funding be cut. We then saw the draft report. As I said, a draft report was sent to the Office of Multicultural Interests. The draft report made a number of key points, some of which I will outline today. It recognised the significant contribution made by the Italian government, and acknowledged that the Italian program provides a range of

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examples of good practice in language provision, teacher preparation and professional development. This is the government's own report acknowledging the professionalism of the Italian language program. It also said that it should be noted that, in providing a de facto mainstream Italian language program, the insertion program classes enrol a significant number of students who do not come from an Italian-speaking background. Indeed, students from this background are now in the minority, even in Catholic schools. This proves the point that this language is being adopted by children other than those from Italian backgrounds.

The report also discusses the deteriorating status of languages in our education system. It notes that the outcome of what is being provided by the Italo centre is important when considering the overall status of language education in Western Australia. Recent media reports highlighted the deteriorating status of language education. Basically, despite the claims made by the minister today, schools are not well funded, and are not sufficiently funded to offer language education without some other support. The draft report sent to the government outlined three possible options. It outlined that it was to increase the budget for the community language program; to maintain current funding arrangements, but with a defined allocation for new schools; or to redefine the program as after-hours only. The draft report said there were three options: increase the budget for the whole program; maintain the current funding arrangements; or redefine the program as after-hours only. That report went on to outline all the disadvantages of abolishing the insertion program. For example, if option 3 were pursued, the report states —

The outcome will be that a currently viable and successful program would effectively be terminated ...

Basically, this report said that the program offered value for money, and should a successful program be terminated, that would be a loss to our education system. There was no finding or key recommendation about the path forward in relation to those three options.

An email from the head of the Office of Multicultural Interests is quite instructive. The head of OMI wrote back to the department to say —

My own initial view is to consider the third model—reduce the program to an after hours program and withdraw support for immersion programs ...

This was an email from the department to the so-called independent review saying that the third option should be the recommended option—that is, cut out the immersion program.

In relation to that, Erebus International produced a revised report. The email attaching the revised report states —

Please find attached the final report ... taking on board your comments and corrections.

A new report is submitted, now with a finding to go with option 3—that is, an after-hours class only.

I will go to another email, again from the Office of Multicultural Interests. This is the commentary from the office about the independent reviewer's report —

- The report is still primarily concerned with program quality.

We want to talk about the issue of equity. It is trying to diminish the issue of program quality because it cannot argue with the equality. The email goes on to say —

Please refrain from using ... emotive language within the funding options section. (eg: winners, losers, punished ... The funding models need to be strengthened by removing passive language and references to disadvantaging the sector.

The office has basically tried to change the report to come up with the option —

Ms M.M. Quirk: A predetermined conclusion.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: A predetermined conclusion. Let us face it; that is what happened. The government then released the final report.

In relation to the final report, the minister committed to giving a ministerial statement in this house but it never eventuated. We now know that a ministerial statement announcing the abolition was prepared for the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests on 20 November. This was before he met with people from the Italo centre to discuss its future. Without sitting around the table and talking with the people whose program he was about to destroy, the minister had already made that decision. The minister tried to create a meeting to discuss the future when he had already made that decision. The minister's consultation was absolutely appalling. Everyone in the community finds that very disrespectful.

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I want to look at the final report. Some contradictions still exist in Erebus's final report. The report recognises the importance of maintaining both insertion classes and after-hours classes for the future of community languages. One of the key principles in the report is that we should continue the in-school, or the immersion, courses.

What is the situation now? Last year, the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests cut the Italian language funding to government schools. I understand that about nine government schools were funded. Of those nine, eight schools now no longer offer Italian language classes. The one school that does offer Italian language was able to raise money from its parents and citizens association to continue the program. The minister announced that the in-school program will be cut by the end of the year. It has created major uncertainty. It is important to note that even though the review report recommended a move away to after-hours only, a long transition was also recommended. The report acknowledged that to rip that money away in one year would be unfair and would lead to significant consequences.

I think we have demonstrated that that review was not an honest review. The minister made a predetermined decision. The minister is trying to pit the Italian language against other languages. That is not right. Any supporter of multiculturalism in this state will not support one culture versus others. What the minister said to the media is absolutely disgraceful. I want people to understand what happened here. *The Sunday Times* was about to write a story about funding cuts to Italian language programs. What does the minister do? He writes an article that is published in *The West Australian*. In that article he uses the words "siphoning off". That implies that this money was not used correctly. I asked the minister to provide proof today that this money was siphoned off. Not only were there reviews, there was also a service delivery agreement between Education and Italo. This whole idea that somehow this funding was used for purposes it was not meant to be used for is absolutely ludicrous. The WA state government signed off these agreements. It was in partnership with Italo. It was a win-win. The minister wanted to get funding for some other languages. Despite spending millions on Bigger Picture advertising, the minister could not find \$300 000 or \$400 000 to fund other programs. As the Leader of the Opposition outlined, despite over \$6 million being spent on blatant political advertising, the minister could not reprioritise expenditure to fund other programs, so he sought to cut the Italian language program for whatever reason. I do not know what deep-seated reason the minister had for cutting the Italian language program, but it was obviously something that has been eating at him for a number of years.

Of course, then we had the editorial. It replicated the words "siphoning off" and made the comment that the Italians "got away with it". That implies that the Italians had somehow been doing something improper.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Exactly. Of course *The West Australian* has had to make a correction. I ask the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests to stand and also apologise to the Italian community today.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton): Members of the public gallery, you are more than welcome to sit here and observe proceedings, but you must do so quietly. Thank you.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: WA Labor strongly supports multiculturalism. I am the daughter of Italian migrants. I resent the claims and accusations made by this minister. They are deeply offensive. To say in this chamber today that I have to go outside my tribe was one of the most offensive things I have heard in this place. It was absolutely offensive. The Labor Party does not support pitting language against language. It does not support pitting culture against culture. This is a program that governments, both Labor and Liberal, have supported for years. It is a win-win. The government is supporting a second language in our education system. We all understand the benefits of children learning a second language, and we all support it. We need to acknowledge the work done by the Italo-Australian Welfare and Cultural Centre and the Italian community. For the minister to dismiss it in the way that he has through his lack of consultation and lack of respect, he must have thought that he could do it because the Italian community is now widespread. The Italian community is not a new community, although there is a second wave of migration, with a lot of young Italians. The minister thought he could just do it and no-one would care.

Minister, this has been a disgrace! The minister should apologise and must rethink this decision. He cannot undertake this decision. He is putting the livelihood of teachers in jeopardy. As I said, he is saying to the Italian community, "We've had enough of you. You can go off." The minister does not acknowledge the contribution of the Italian community in WA. His dismissive and basically offensive comments today show me that he is a minister who is not fit to be a minister for multiculturalism in this state. The fact that he stands by and allows words such as "siphoning off" to be used is an absolute disgrace to this chamber but, moreover, to his government.

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MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [4.31 pm]: I rise to support and make a few remarks on the motion moved by the member for West Swan. I first of all begin by acknowledging the people in the gallery who are concerned about this important issue, as well as the broader Western Australian community, particularly the people who work in the Italian language program in our schools and who support the program.

I begin by acknowledging that the member for West Swan is a woman of Italian descent who feels very strongly about this program. About 10 out of 89 members of this Parliament were either born in Italy or are of Italian descent. I think that is broadly reflective of the Western Australian community, which has a very strong community of people who were either born in Italy or are of Italian descent, with Italian parents, grandparents and the like. The program has been built by this community over a long period to reflect the strong connection of people from Italy with their community.

Over the past three and a bit years that I have had the role of opposition leader, I have fulfilled the important role of engaging very heavily with the multicultural community of Western Australia. I was born in a country town, which was not very diverse, I might say. I grew up and went to university in a college which was not very diverse either. I joined the Royal Australian Navy, which at that time was not very diverse either; and I lived in Rockingham, which is not one of the most diverse places around Western Australia either. The past three years, therefore, have been a very instructive and informative period for me in meeting and engaging with many multicultural communities around Western Australia. We often say in our speeches that Western Australia is one of the most harmonious places on earth. The way we have worked as a community with people from 180 different parts of the world living here in Western Australia is the envy of the rest of the country and the envy of the rest of the world; and we have done it extremely well. One of the things I have noticed in the numerous events, speeches and things in which I have engaged with the very broad multicultural community in Western Australia is that people in the multicultural community are very concerned to avoid division, one against another, because they know what it does in other countries and other communities. They are very concerned to avoid that mistake that occurs in other parts of the world. Pitting community against community is anathema to Western Australians and it is anathema to people of diverse backgrounds in this state because we all know where it leads. It leads to a very bad outcome—sectarianism, division, hatreds, racism and the like. Pitting one community against the other is what we must always avoid in this country. That is one of the reasons that I believe the way this issue has been handled is very sad and very counterproductive.

The member for West Swan outlined the basis of this program for learning the Italian language, the number of people engaging in it and how well it has worked for a long time. It is very important that I refer to the big contribution from both the Italian community and the Italian government towards this program. I understand that last financial year the state contributed around \$800 000 towards this program. That contribution has been leveraged by a contribution from others into the employment of all these people and all this activity with around 22 000 students learning Italian as a consequence of what is, in overall terms, a very, very small amount of money in the context of a state budget of around \$30 billion. The state's contribution has therefore been leveraged by all those other contributions. Of course, when state support is taken away, the other contributions can dissipate as well. The structure has therefore built up over the past 30 years and before, with the state contribution commencing in 1985. When we take away that state contribution, the other contributions can dissipate because there are always competing demands for resources. That is why it is very important to maintain the infrastructure that has been built with 80 or so schools, 22 000 students and all these teachers, some of whom are in the gallery. As we all know—as the Australian Democrats learnt the other day—if we take away the structures, everything can collapse. That is why this is a very important issue.

I want to quote what the Prime Minister said before he became Prime Minister. He said that making sure that every Australian child was learning another language was one of his goals as Prime Minister, and within 10 years he expected the take-up of languages other than English would be enormously greater. That is what he said. He wanted to achieve that. I think that a lot of Australians—me included—are not particularly good at other languages. However, I believe it is important to learn another language for two reasons. One is that if a person's mind becomes adept at learning another language, it assists them in all other areas of learning as well. The capacity to take in other languages—I do not know the exact terms—in the sounds, the nuances and the consonants and everything else that goes with a language, assists them in learning other things as well. I wish that my children at primary school had some capacity in other languages because it would be so very good for their other learning. The second reason is that Australians down here in the southern part of the world are our future. There is so much tied up in knowing and learning other languages around the world.

The Italian language is very important around the world. It is spoken in various countries throughout Africa. I might also add that it is spoken very heavily in other parts of Australia. It is a beautiful language. It is the closest language in the twenty-first century to the original Latin. It is known as a Romance language. I think

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Spanish might have some of those origins as well. The romantic languages go back a couple of thousand years and, as I said, are spoken throughout all parts of Europe. It is therefore important that people learn Italian.

I want to make a couple of other points. It is very hard to recreate this infrastructure. I know what the argument will be from the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. He will say, “Well, we have to share with every other language, and all languages are important.” All I would say about that is this—and I return to what I said at the beginning of my speech: my impression of Western Australia’s wonderful multicultural communities is that they do not like to see one group torn down to benefit another. They do not like that sort of activity, because that has been the experience elsewhere and they do not want it repeated here. The second point I make is that if there are around 180 different nationalities in Western Australia, and if this program is taking 50 per cent or 60 per cent—I think the minister said 80 per cent—of the funding for this issue, sharing \$800 000 a year between 180 other languages will not go very far. The minister referred to Swahili and a few other languages today, but the more divided that small amount of money becomes, the less productive it will be—and that is a problem. I understand as much as anyone else that a pot of money is only so big and so deep, but this program is suffering as a consequence of this issue that we are now debating—the extraordinarily poor financial management by this government over the last six and a half years. The fact that we are in deficit is a disgrace. The fact that our debt levels have blown out by 700 per cent at a time of record revenues is a disgrace, and this program is one of the casualties. This is a sad development for this program, and it is very sad that the government has created a situation whereby there is no capacity, apparently, to assist other languages without tearing down this program. It is very sad that that appears to be the case. It is also very sad for people like Enzo Sirna, a respected member of the Italian community. He has been spurred into action and written letters to the editor about the way that this program has been treated and pitted against other languages in Western Australia. The way that all these things have happened is very sad because it did not need to be managed in this way. It is also sad that all these people are potentially unemployed in an important area on which our state should be concentrating.

I support this motion and the work undertaken by the member for West Swan. I hope that a better resolution is reached than the one currently before us, and I hope that the language of people involved becomes more sensible, civilised and respectful towards people in the Italian community who carry out this great work.

MR F.A. ALBAN (Swan Hills) [4.42 pm]: Obviously, I am not the lead speaker for the government on this motion—we have the minister here—so I will speak very broadly on the issue. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests has far more information at his disposal so I will cover only certain issues. For the benefit of those members in the chamber who do not already know, I am of Italian descent. I was born in Italy and arrived in Western Australia when I was six years old. As a basis and in response to the motion before us, I would like to preface my speech with the findings of a recent independent review by Erebus International. The review found a significant imbalance in the distribution of funds and a considerable amount of unmet need for the provision of community language programs across a wide range of languages, and that the current program structure does not reflect best practice in the delivery of these programs. At the time of the review, 77 per cent or \$784 950 of CLP funds were directed towards Italian insertion classes in both the public and Catholic school systems, and an additional 29 community language schools covering 18 languages, including Italian, and over 3 300 students secured the remaining 23 per cent of the funds. This next point is fairly critical: in 1976 the Italian-born community comprised 9.5 per cent of the Western Australian population. According to the 2011 census, the Italian community represented 0.9 per cent, which is under one per cent, of the total population compared with the Indian-born community, which comprised 1.3 per cent—larger than the Italian figure—and the Malaysian-born community, which comprised 1.1 per cent of the population. Something of note that I am sure the Italians here today will understand is that a parent does not discriminate one child from another, and nor should a state discriminate one nationality from another.

Dr A.D. Buti: The government discriminated by destroying the program.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: The member had his opportunity. If he thinks his yelling is going to make any difference —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! So far, members, we have had a fairly civilised debate on this issue, which has been appreciated, I am sure, by Hansard and certainly by me. I would like it to continue in that vein. Member for Armadale, if you interject again and call across the chamber, I will call you to order.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. Member for Armadale, I am not intimidated by loud voices—I come from that sort of family as well!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Can the member direct his comments through the Chair, please.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker.

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Every single step my parents took on their journey to Western Australia was similar to those taken by many others. We were not on our own; we all had a similar experience. From 1956, I watched those steps. As a six-year-old, I watched my parents and their friends. Their language, their culture, their dress and their food were mocked. Of course it is now all very cool—being Italian is as cool as a person can get. Some other migrant experiences may have been different. I am not sure the Alban family were any better or any worse, so I cannot make a determination on that. A big word in the Italian culture is “disrespect”, and another word used by the member for West Swan was “injustice”. As far as I am concerned, a stand-out example of disrespect and injustice was the internment during the Second World War; that is what I call disrespect and injustice. Italians are a proud —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Warnbro! You are actually on three calls along with a number of your colleagues. I would not like to have to eject someone from the chamber. Let us remain civilised. The member for Swan Hills has the call and I would like to hear from him.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Italians are a proud, productive people. They brought with them the very best aspects of their homeland—thrift, enterprise, a love of land and their work, which is where the Italian work ethic comes from. They also came over here with a burning ambition to succeed and establish their families in this, their adopted land. They did this mostly through sheer hard, physical work. They did not have capital and they had very few opportunities. The people who I knew neither asked for nor received charity or looked for any opportunity for a free ride. The Italians who I know are now established and financially successful. This community language program is an important and worthwhile project. I am not speaking much of the past, which seems to have been very successful, but about the decisions that need to be made right now. As a social and economic initiative, learning a foreign language or a second language improves cultural ties with each migrant and their country of birth, and interrelationships nationally. Is it time for the Italian community to take a leadership role? We are now more able to look after our own, especially when recognising the many recent migrations of people from places such as Burma who arrived penniless as we did 56 years ago. People have come from Burma, India and Malaysia. Ladies and gentlemen or members of Parliament, the test is a very Australian one: is it fair? Any form of support from the state government for a project such as a community language program is gratefully received and acknowledged as this is a student-based funding model throughout our various nationalities, which in its implementation is fair. The opposition’s attempt to shame the Liberal–National government on something like respect and the kind of stuff that it knows is a very emotive thing with Italians is rubbish and without foundation. I suspect that the Italian community would be embarrassed at Labor’s attempt to raise this matter in our state Parliament. We had a wonderful relationship and the Italians are respected throughout this state. I suspect that many members, if they were aware of these facts, would not support what the opposition is doing here.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: Yes, they were listening; that is great.

I suspect that this exercise was more for the self-promotion of opposition members. The member for West Swan has not made a case for disrespect. The member for West Swan has also not shown that there has been an injustice. It is not because of disrespect that these adjustments are being made. It is an acknowledgment that there are many more nationalities that need our support. I would imagine that after some 30 years of the Italian community being the main recipient, without challenge, of funding for this program, some Italians may resent the change. Italians are important to this state, but that should not be to the detriment of other nationalities. Fifty years ago, as part of the post-war migration, it was acceptable to accept assistance, although I remember being offered very little in my early years. However, the Italian community today incorporates a broader spectrum of business leaders and successful operators. That includes in this chamber six members of Italian descent—or slightly more than 10 per cent, which is greater than our presence in this state. Our culture is now represented by doctors, teachers and lawyers, and certainly councillors and mayors, and members of Parliament. It is my view that these successful migrants could possibly again be embarrassed at being portrayed as needy. The Italians whom I know are proud, self-reliant and self-sufficient people. Many came to this country, as I said earlier, with nothing, and I am sure that, having built a life here, they would be ashamed to see the languages of other cultures not supported in the same manner as the Italian language has been supported. There is also an opportunity for the established Italian community, with underutilised self-built and self-funded facilities, which are a great contribution to this state, to play a lead role in the recent waves of migration. I want all members to remember what it was like 50 or 60 years ago when nobody helped them. The support for foreign language skills is extremely important. That includes the Italian language. It is a bond to our homeland and a valuable component of our international trade and reciprocal tourist trade.

I do not question the member for West Swan’s sincerity in bringing forward this motion. I question her logic.

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MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle) [4.53 pm]: I am very happy to speak this afternoon on this motion, which states —

That this house condemns the Barnett government for its cuts to the Italian community language program and the lack of respect shown to the Italian community in Western Australia.

Of course, as the member for Fremantle, I am very proud to represent a significant section of the Italian community that resides in Fremantle and the wider Fremantle area. Fremantle and Western Australia are all the better for the significant amount of Italian migration that we have had to our state. In Fremantle, as in other places, the Italian culture is celebrated in a number of ways, not the least of which is the contribution that the Italian community has made to food.

The Italian culture has been celebrated as part of the multiculturalism of our state. However, through the actions of the Barnett government and this Minister for Multicultural Affairs, we now have a very divisive and negative approach to the funding of the community language program. Rather than see the program that has been run by the Italo–Australian Welfare and Cultural Centre for nearly 37 years as a very successful model for a community language program, this Minister for Multicultural Affairs—it is incredible that he would hold this portfolio in light of his current actions—has been going out over the last 18 months to two years and dismantling this program. It is clear from the minister’s answers in question time today that he approached the Department of Education and said, “We have the cultural languages program. How is it being run? I have some communities that would like to get access to this money.” The department told him how the program was being run, and the minister said, “I think it would be more appropriate if the program came under one of my portfolios, so let us move it from the Department of Education to the Office of Multicultural Interests”—a portfolio for which the minister has responsibility. The minister then undertook a review, and as we have seen from the speech of the member for West Swan and the work of the shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the report of that review was massaged in such a way as to give the outcome that the minister wanted, and that was to strip the Italian language program of funds and therefore close down a very successful program.

The report of the review into the community language program makes the clear point of congratulating and acknowledging the quality of the community language program, and the Italian language program in particular. The report states at page 8 —

The community language providers are clearly meeting their objectives in promoting cultural maintenance and contributing positively to a cohesive, multicultural Australian society.

The report states also that even in its current form, the community language program represents good value for money invested by government.

On the Italian program, the report states —

The Italian program nevertheless provides a range of examples of good practice in terms of language provision, teacher preparation and professional development.

Later in the report, again speaking specifically about the Italian program, it states —

The program has many strong features and elements of good practice that should be emulated by other community language providers.

It is clear from this report that the Italian language program, particularly the immersion program, has been very successful and could be a model for how we can encourage the expansion of the community language program—which is something that I think we would all like to see. However, the barrier to that is funding. The lack of funding provided to the community language program overall is identified by this report as one of the barriers to why the program cannot be expanded to other languages. I find it interesting that the per capita funding to the community language program in Western Australia is the lowest of all the states. Even Tasmania allocates a higher amount per capita to the community language program than is the case in Western Australia. The table in the report indicates that the per capita funding in New South Wales is \$123.50, in South Australia is \$140, in Queensland is higher, in Victoria is \$119, and in Tasmania is \$75. However, the per capita amount in Western Australia is only \$65. Similarly, those states are able to demonstrate significant in-kind support to the community language program; for example, they are given subsidised or free rent. The report makes the point that in Western Australia, there is very limited in-kind support. The community language program has been starved of funds. We know that the Italian language program has been able to gain a significant contribution from the Italian government per annum—about \$260 000 in today’s dollars. As has been pointed out, over the life of the program, about \$10 million has been contributed by the Italian government towards this program. That money will now be lost because of the partisan and divisive way in which this government has decided to approach the community language program.

We have a quality program but it is being punished. Why is it being punished? It is because this government has refused to look at providing extra money to extend the program and a quality program to other languages. The

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report of the Erebus International report titled “Review of the WA Community Languages Program” states on page 20 —

... they promote stronger cultural integration and minimize alienation and marginalization of cultures
... build mutual respect between communities, and encourage awareness of the benefits inherent in multiculturalism.

Clear benefits are identified from the community language program. We know that Western Australia’s per capita funding contribution is incredibly low. The better solution offered by this government was indicated in the report. It gave a number of funding alternatives as outlined by the member for West Swan but what limits the two options that would have seen the Italian program continue are the parlous state of the state’s finances. Clearly, due to the state of our budget, which we know this government is responsible for, the report dismisses alternatives that would see a more appropriate level of per capita funding to the community language program. Other people want to speak on this issue, so I will finish by saying that I think it is very important that not only the Italian community, but also anyone who is interested in multiculturalism in this state fully understand what this government has done. It has not built on a successful language program by extending that model to ensure that a successful program is extended to other languages. It has criticised, insulted and belittled one successful program and said it would deliver that money to other languages. This point was well made in a letter to *The West Australian* from an associate professor of Italian at the University of Western Australia, John Kinder, on this issue and it states —

... language teachers all around the State—primary, secondary and tertiary—know that language learning is good for our children.

Government can maintain a successful language program that builds a relationship with another country.

It can build on this and encourage agreements with other countries to expand the horizons of the next generation and build a more secure financial future on a broader skills base.

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests) [5.02 pm]: I would like to comment on this program. I take my role as Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests very seriously; indeed, I am very passionate about it. In November 2004, the Gallop government put out a very nice document called the “WA Charter of Multiculturalism”. The last paragraph before the vision statement reads —

Over the last decade and beyond much has been learnt about the nature and impact of institutional barriers. At their core lie the unthinking continuation of routine organisational practices that *in their effect* can be discriminatory. The essential lesson of institutional barriers is that we may unknowingly discriminate. In promoting equal participation, and enabling all Western Australians to enjoy all aspects of society, the Government of Western Australia will seek to identify and eliminate institutional barriers wherever they exist.

The community language program is a very important program. Members opposite and on this side have highlighted the importance of studying a language other than English. We encourage it by funding our schools, TAFEs and universities. However, there is no doubt that some challenges exist. There is a great deal of confusion among members opposite about the community language program. As the Erebus report shows, the community language program continues to provide a vital ingredient in our multicultural society. It allows community groups to teach their language and culture to their children, friends and others. It provides a vehicle for people to learn languages other than their own or in addition to their own. It provides the glue that holds community groups together by meeting and enjoying culture. The funding program provides a funding base to hold the groups together. It is very important. As the member for Swan Hills indicated, we remain a very multicultural society and in the last 10 years we have enhanced it immensely. People have come from around the globe to become Western Australians, and that is nothing but positive.

There has been a very large growth in the number of groups who want to participate in Western Australian society and want to hold community language programs. However, when I first became Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, a range of people said that they would like to start a school for teaching Swahili, Hindi, Karen language or whatever, but the community language program was closed—there were no new participants. I inquired about it and spoke to the Minister for Education. A sum of \$1 million was put into that. There were no details, so I made some inquiries. Clearly that \$1 million was not being transferred to community language after-school programs outside mainstream education for non-profit community groups. They simply were not getting it. As was pointed out, I asked the Minister for Education to transfer it to me because the major users were multicultural groups; it was about language maintenance and learning embedded in culture. The Department of Education has not done well by this program, I might add. It was going to cut it, which section I

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do not know, but we saved it from the cuts and transferred the fund. That was an achievement. I saw the documentation for the program.

The member for West Swan said it had been reviewed. The community language program has not been reviewed. A study was done in 1999 called “A Cost Benefit Analysis of the Italian Programs in Western Australian Government Primary Schools”. It was a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the Italian program or providing Italian lessons embedded in public schools was better. It was not a review of the community language program at all. The Auditor General looked at the Italian insertion program, not the community language program as a whole. A review has not been done, so I undertook one. Erebus is probably the best known group on community language around Australia. I encourage everyone to read the report. The report is quite clear; it is about equity and access. In Western Australia one group, one language—Italian—gets 80 per cent of the available money. That is not contestable; that is, other groups, new groups, old groups, cannot contest it. We take a pot of money—\$1 million—of which 80 per cent goes to one group, one language, and it has been doing so for decades. Is that fair? How can we justify this? We also found that about 70 per cent of the total pool is not going to community language programs—after-school, non-profit groups—outside the mainstream, but in fact through the insertion program, it is going to primarily Catholic schools and some public schools.

Members opposite are right. The history is outlined here; there are similar Italian insertion programs in other states. Briefly, the history, as I understand it, is that back in the 1970s there was a program in most states to have insertion programs for Italian, primarily in Catholic schools. It was heavily funded by the Italian communities in those states and the Italian government. New South Wales funded that in part from a community language program; other states did not. The reason they did that was that, as members say, it was difficult. The Catholic school system in particular expressed its great difficulty in getting teachers of a language, including Italian, and organising the courses. The schools obviously went to the Italo–Australian Welfare and Cultural Centre and asked whether it could help. It is a good program; I have no problem with it. From all the evidence I have seen, and as the review highlights, Italo has done a good job of organising teachers and curriculum delivery to Catholic schools.

Ms M.M. Quirk: You just used the words “siphoned off”, minister.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Just calm down. It is a very important issue.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Girrawheen!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The problem is that the community language program is expressly set up to fund non-profit —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, you have been called three times. When I came to the chair, the member for Fremantle was being heard in silence and I think you need to afford the same opportunity to the minister.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The community language program is set up to provide the training of languages through non-mainstream education. Indeed, Italo has to teach Italian after school, outside the mainstream system. Most of the funds, however, go through the insertion program. We fund our public schools, our Catholic schools and our independent schools quite generously to assist and train teachers in a whole range of courses, including a language other than English. I think there are about six or seven different languages in our public schools, and I think in Catholic schools also. None of them get an insertion program except those that teach Italian. I do not believe any others have asked for it. There is German, French, Indonesian, Japanese and Mandarin. The schools that teach those other languages do not get assistance through this program. There is no insertion program for Mandarin.

Dr A.D. Buti: You said they didn’t ask for it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, but the schools pay for it. This is the central point: Catholic schools and the public schools are already funded to provide language training other than English in their schools and if they wish to, they have the money for it. What has happened here is that there is a limited amount of money of \$1 million a year that has not been used for the purposes for which it was intended—that is, for after-school community care; there is no other funding for it—but has been used for an insertion program to supplement the already generous funding provided to the public in Catholic schools.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, you are on three calls.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Is that fair? No. How could it be? The member accuses me of pitting culture against culture and language against language, but that is the opposite of what I am doing. I am trying to provide free and open access for everybody. Here is what the member is saying: because this program has been going for 30 years —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, under standing order 48 you are on three —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I will take into account the fact that it is your motion, but I ask you please to allow the minister to speak. You are on three calls, so I am well within my rights to suspend you, but given the petition from your colleagues, I will take that into account.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The community language program has not been reviewed for a long time. The funding is for \$1 million or thereabouts. There are two parts to this issue. About 20 per cent of the funding is used for the purposes the money was actually allocated for in the first place, which I repeat was for after-school, non-mainstream community groups providing language training, in the past to their own communities, but also more widely. Because there was a fixed amount of money and 80 per cent was used for insertion programs, no new programs have been funded for quite a few years. Because of the growth of multicultural society, a whole range of groups have come to me. In fact, Erebus found that 15 groups with 750 kids have asked it for funding and they have been knocked back because the bulk of the funds have been used to supplement funding in the formal education system. What have I done? I have made some changes, which I announced in Parliament. By the way, Erebus, the Office of Multicultural Interests and I had extensive discussions with all the groups involved over a long period of time, including Italo. The claim that I ignored Italo is simply false.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I had extensive discussions with Italo, including with Enzo Sirna. He obviously did not like the outcome of the review—fair enough—and Italo obviously did not. What have we done? In 2015 we stopped funding of about \$100 000 for the insertion program in public schools. We have continued it for Catholic schools for a year. We also increased the total funding for the community language program by \$250 000, or 25 per cent. The member for Fremantle said that the report showed that we underspent on the community language program, and that is true, but that of course excludes the insertion program. We were providing \$65 per student for after-school community language programs. That is easily the lowest of any state and that has not changed for a long time. By the way, there are literally dozens of schools out there that get no money because the money is being used for other purposes. We have increased funding per student from \$65 to \$100—a 40 per cent increase. From what we can find out, it is the first time in decades funding has been increased. Another thing that the report discussed is quality control in the community language program—improving quality—because it was starved of funds. In most of these community language schools the teachers are not paid. They have to pay rent and they put their own curriculum together. At one of the Vietnamese schools one of the parents wrote the whole curriculum. These schools are starved of funds so we have increased the funding and we will look to increase it next year. We aim to be the most generous state in terms of addressing the issues in community after-school care. We have also started a process of opening up discussion with potentially new schools. We are going out widely in the community and asking schools whether they want such a program. I meet such communities all the time, including the Swahili and the Hindi Samaj communities. A good Hindi Samaj program is being run already, but with no money, and the Swahili program is starting out. These are very important languages. The recent review by the federal government on the importance of languages highlighted these as priority languages. They have not got any funding from us so far. There is also the Karen language. We are expanding the funding and the number of schools, and we will concentrate —

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please, in the gallery! Listen, but do not make noise.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: We are expanding the funding and the number of schools, and we will concentrate solely on after-school care.

There are a couple of other issues we must discuss. This has been a delicate discussion because the Italo program has been running for a long time and it has a large number of people, teachers and textbooks that support it, and from all the evidence I have seen it provides a very good service overwhelmingly to Catholic schools but also to the few public providers. They need to go to the Catholic school system and say that they have had links with it for decades. The government of Western Australia, as well the commonwealth government, funds the schools very generously, on condition that they teach a language other than English. Some schools fund the teaching of

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German, Mandarin and Indonesian out of their own budget and hire Italo to provide the quality service that it does. That is what they should do. At the same time, the program would have the money to provide more community after-school teaching, and bring the program back to the purpose for which it was designed—providing community language education after school and outside the mainstream. That has to be much more generous to the many schools that are expanding. This is fair and equitable. How could the opposition not argue that case?

The member for West Swan is saying to me that, in confronting this issue, I somehow doctored this report. She should read it. It makes quite clear that there are serious inequities in the funding of community language programs. One group gets 80 per cent of the funding, and most of that is being used to supplement mainstream education. I will work with Italo to help it go to the Catholic schools. I will write to every Catholic school principal and say that the Western Australian government gives the Catholic education system per capita funding that includes the study of languages other than English. The schools have a good relationship with Italo, and if they are satisfied with it, they should hire it to teach Italian in the schools. That is what they should be doing this year. I will help them by writing to every school principal.

In the meantime, we have increased the funding from \$65 to \$100 per child this year. We are communicating with multicultural organisations looking for other schools that want to provide funding. There was a weakness in quality assurance, and we are helping them to create curriculum. In other states, one of the key issues is that the state government has had discussions with the education department to help community language programs get access, at low cost, to schools. Right now, most of the community language programs are after school on Saturday or Sunday, or maybe on a Friday night, and many of them have to pay a great deal of money, which means they have to charge higher fees and pay their teachers less. One of the things we are doing is working with the Department of Education to provide better access to school facilities at a lower cost to expand these programs.

We also work with the various community language programs to enable them, if they wish, to provide a continuum of education in their chosen language all the way from primary school to year 12. In the community language program, in addition to languages they can do at school, they can get a tertiary entrance grade in their chosen language. Many of these languages cannot be taught at schools—Swahili or Arabic, except in some of the Muslim schools. We are assisting in improving the quality control and length of training. This should have been done a long time ago. This is the first report in years, and it shows what some of the points are.

Ms M.M. Quirk: You have been sitting on it for six months.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, and we are implementing it.

One of the essences of multiculturalism in Western Australia is that we do not confine ourselves to our own group. We are open to each other and we intermingle; we do not set group against group. However, that is what this program is doing. When 80 per cent of the funding is allocated to one group, and access to the program is closed off, it is not equitable, and the opposition knows that. The opposition knows that it is not equitable when access to the program is closed off and 80 per cent of the money is going to one group, and is being used to supplement already heavily funded formal education in public and private schools. The opposition knows that we cannot sustain that. The program is well established. The opposition says that it is an excellent program, and I say that it is an excellent program, so Italo should go out to the Catholic schools and get funding for its program. The schools need to teach a language other than English, and they like Italo, which has worked with them for years, and the schools have the money to do it. This will allow the government to increase the funding for the purposes for which the program was designed and specified for—after-school community language training.

This review has been long in coming. It needed to be done a long time ago, and a range of groups that have been cut off from the funding for the community language program or whose supply of funds has been curtailed, are looking forward to this, and the opposition is saying that they should not have this. This is the magic pudding stuff. If we were to fund all those groups to the same level at which we provide for the insertion program, we would have to spend \$150 million a year. There are 200 different language groups out there.

Mr P. Papalia: Let them ask for it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: They are asking for it. They have asked for it and they have been turned down. That is the point.

Mr D.A. Templeman: You're making this up as you go along.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, I am not.

The central point is that we already fund the Catholic schools and the public schools in this state more generously than is the case in any other state, and in that funding is an explicit requirement to offer a language other than English. They have the requirement, they have the funding and they are, in many cases, funding other languages—German, Japanese, Indonesian, and also Italian—outside the insertion program. Italo should go and

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offer its services to the schools that we have already funded, freeing up the money for the real need in community language programs. That is fair and equitable. Arguing otherwise might be politically attractive in a very narrow sense, but as Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, I am not going to ignore the many demands for community language programs in the multicultural community of Western Australia. I am not going to come to a program and ignore it, after it has not been reviewed for decades. I am not going to allow the funding for a program meant for certain purposes to be used for another purpose. I am going to work with the Italo groups to find other funding sources for their program. That is called leadership. This should have been done a long time ago, and I am disappointed that people opposite made a political game out of this. That is what is turning people against people—the actions of the opposition, not mine.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Fremantle, I call you to order for the first time. I ask you to desist.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I might add that I received an email today from another Italian group that just highlights one of the problems. It had been teaching Italian after school, out on its own, with no assistance from this program, for years—since 1956. I do not know whether it is asking for money. It just highlighted that this program needs to be equitable to all languages and to all groups. This needs to be transparent—we are, on a per capita basis—and done fairly. That is the essence of multiculturalism in Western Australia. Allowing a program to remain unreviewed and money being used for purposes other than what it was designed for is not transparent. Before I finish, can I say that I am not and never have criticised Italo for its behaviour.

Several members interjected.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: No, I did not. I criticised the Department of Education Services for not running this program well.

Mr B.S. Wyatt: No, you did not.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Yes, I did. The program was redirected by the Department of Education Services to solve a problem it had in the formal education system; that is, the Catholic school system —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I call you for the third time. Please allow the minister to speak. He is not responding to your interjections. Let him speak.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Years ago, the Catholic school system went to the department and said, “We’re having a hard time procuring Italian teachers; can you help us?” Undoubtedly they went to Italo and asked, “Could you arrange it?” It did. Italo did it for years, and it has done it well. The problem was not the Italo service and not Italo responding to a request, but the funding came from the community language program. As a result, it took away the bulk of funds for real community language programs rather than insertion and mainstream programs. That is the problem. The Labor Party can go out and make all these claims about me and ask me to resign and whatnot, but I know that the multicultural community in Western Australia will support what I have done as an action of leadership, fairness and commitment to multicultural Western Australia. I stand by that.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Thank you in the gallery. You can listen, but do not make any noise. Thank you.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [5.32 pm]: I say buona sera to the people in the public gallery.

I was absolutely amazed when the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests cited the “WA Charter of Multiculturalism” in this place in support of his actions. I was surprised because it showed that the minister had absolutely no understanding of the basis of substantive equality. Substantive equality means getting equal outcomes. The minister’s decisions mean there will not be equal outcomes, and I will explain why in a minute. With the veneer of equity, the minister has pitted communities against communities. He has created a “dog in the manger” attitude, which people do not generally subscribe to. He has fomented the argument that the Italians are siphoning off all the money. Communities are parroting back to me the minister’s dodgy lines. The minister’s denial that he has not created haves and have-nots is absolutely rubbish. I have been at events where people have thanked the minister for his funding commitment, even before this report was finished. I know the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests wants to support other groups, and I am supportive of that, but he should not play off one group against another. He does not say there is equity. I will explain why there is no equity. It has to do with the demographics of the Italian population.

Apparently, Catholic schools have a bottomless pit. In the information I obtained under freedom of information, I was horrified at one of the documents that is briefing the people undertaking a focus group. It is highly sectarian and it is highly objectionable. Under the heading “History and background of CLP in WA”, it states —

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- Languages have traditionally been strong in Western Australian Catholic schools. Over the years Italian enrolments in Catholic schools have been consistently high compared to other languages. This is most likely attributable to the relatively high proportion of Italian Catholic families who migrated to Western Australia last century and sent their children to Catholic schools.

That is unobjectionable. It continues —

- The historical affiliations with Italy and Rome through migration and the Catholic Church have no doubt helped contribute to this strength.

That is sectarian rubbish. Frankly, the stakeholder community consultation, from what I could see, was no more than push polling to other groups. It was planting in their minds the fact that the Italians were getting something that was not available to them. That is really important. The member for West Swan has very comprehensively outlined this corrupted process —

Point of Order

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The member referred to a document. I ask her to table it.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! I am listening to the minister.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: She said it was to do with the Catholic education system. She is implying that it is part of the Erebus review.

Mr M. McGOWAN: On the point of order, I would have thought the minister would have known that under the standing orders the only people who can be asked to table a document are ministers. That is clear under the standing orders. Unfortunately, this Treasurer does not know his standing orders.

Mr J. NORBERGER: I ask the member for Cannington to withdraw his comments in relation to calling the Treasurer a goose.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, minister. The Leader of the Opposition is right; thank you very much for your assistance. There is no point of order either, member for Joondalup.

Debate Resumed

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am very keen to bring this to a vote because I think that certain members, such as the member for Balcatta, need to show what side their bread is buttered on. I need to correct the minister when he talked about \$65 going to Catholic schools—in fact it was \$35.

I refer members to an excellent report that was recently released. It illustrates why I say that the minister's decision will ultimately lead to unequal outcomes. Instead of the equity that he is championing so much, it has the opposite outcome. It is the practical effect of his decision. The report I refer to is titled "Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds". It was prepared by the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and was released in March of this year. On page 31 is a list of the top 10 non-English speaking countries of birth for population aged 65-plus in Western Australia. Italians comprise 22.3 per cent of people aged over 65. The next nearest is people from the Netherlands at 8.8 per cent, Burma is 2.8 and so on. We have two situations. We have a situation in which elderly Western Australians who have Italian as their first language—we know that second languages tend to fall away as people get older—will be disadvantaged if we cannot get bilingual carers and if grandchildren cannot talk to nonna at the Villa Terenzio or wherever.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: But it applies more to Italians because 22.8 per cent of the culturally and linguistically diverse population aged over 65 are Italian. That is a very important outcome. If there are no bilingual carers, if their grandchildren cannot talk to them, they will be further socially excluded. This report further found that unlike non-culturally and linguistically diverse communities, CALD elderly people rely much more on family and informal care. Therefore, bilingual care and support is very important. That means that kids currently in schools need to be able to learn the language. It is disproportionately disadvantaged for Catholic schools. This is not an academic, theoretical or hypothetical situation. It is happening every day in aged-care homes, so much so that Alzheimer's Australia WA Ltd, run by Rhonda Parker, is conducting a seminar in a couple of weeks' time on the needs of CALD patients with dementia. That is funded by the commonwealth. These are live issues and it is absolutely puerile and facile to say that everyone will be treated equally in this way. I accept that the cake is a certain size, but the minister is not without the wit and expertise to be able to deal with that issue. This report is

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also completely lacking with its failure to acknowledge the funding that has been attracted from Italy. That is a really relevant issue. It was not mentioned in the Erebus report —

Dr M.D. Nahan: Yes, it was.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: If it was, it was only in passing. That multiplier effect will be lost. I want the matter to go to a vote. If members opposite are thinking about elderly Western Australians, they are not thinking about elderly Italians and they should be ashamed.

MR I.M. BRITZA (Morley) [5.41 pm]: I feel that I have no alternative but to speak and at least share what I imagine are some practical points about this issue, not political points. I have heard political stuff here and I just keep thinking that we are talking about people. Sure, political points are easy to gain and easy to present but the problem with political points is they are gone one day and they are a whisper in the ear the next day. I said in my inaugural speech that what counts is that it is very easy to do justice but it is very difficult to do right. What we are primarily talking about here—get all the froth and bubble out of the world—is equity and access. I cannot claim that I have the most Italian representatives in my electorate, but I have a lot of ethnic people and communities in my electorate. I speak to and spend time with them all. Until this situation came up, all I knew was that from the Hindi Samaj community, the African community, the Karen people—I have been to Katanning where the Karen young people have been learning their language, and it is true that maybe they never thought to ask —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members. There are just too many audible conversations, I am sorry. It is making it difficult for Hansard and for me to hear so if members could go outside. Member for Cockburn, that includes you.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: I did not realise until today that the reason some of these people do not have funding is—as one member yelled out—that they have not asked. Then we found out that they did in fact ask, but there was no money to give them. I was not aware of that particular issue, but when it came up, especially this year when I realised that there are communities that I am heavily involved with who are teaching their young people their home-language as well as the English language, all I wanted was equality. I can bat for that but I cannot bat for over-representation. I cannot do that with any sense of a conscience.

I will not go through the whole list, but I have a list of approximately 30 organisations. In the 2014 funding, only four programs out of the 30 got less than \$25 000. Every other organisation got less than \$10 000—some only got \$1 500. I would imagine that those particular organisations would have been delighted to get \$1 500! Of the four organisations that got less than \$25 000, the highest amount was—I beg your pardon; the Chinese got \$58 000. They are far and away out in front of the rest of them. The majority—about 90 per cent—got well below \$10 000 in funding. The Italian community and organisations got \$705 000 and \$80 000. I do not care what anybody says; that is unequal. We are not talking about cutting it down to \$80 000, or \$200 000, or \$500 000, which I reckon there would be an argument for. We are talking about access. We are talking about the people in my community who never knew that this funding was available to them, to be able to tell them that they can now get funding. I can now tell them that there is an avenue to get funding so that they can teach their children their language so that they can communicate in not only English, but also their home language.

I have a strong Italian community in my electorate. They are wonderful and supportive, and I enjoy that. I enjoy the fact that their children speak Italian. When I go to a particular African group and I speak the language that I was brought up in, I see their eyes widen with delight because someone other than their own families can speak their language. I know, as stated here today, how wonderful it is to learn a second language because speaking that language to those people makes them feel like someone cares. In my opinion and from what I have observed, we are talking about wanting equality but we are not getting it because we are bringing down the bar only a little bit—just a little bit. We want the rest of the community to know that there is funding available for them. It is therefore very simple for me to make the decision to not support this motion because I do not believe it supports the people that I represent in my electorate.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [5.47 pm]: I was very interested to hear the member for Morley saying that it would be very easy for him to not support this motion; I have never known him to not support the government on any motion or against a motion. It is great that the member for Morley has shown great moral fortitude.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Order, members for Geraldton and Swan Hills.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Swan Hills mentioned being born in Italy and how hard it was coming to Australia. I can relate to that regarding my father. In my inaugural speech, I talked about a man who was told off by his boss for speaking to an Australian girl, and a young boy who ran home from school for being teased about

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being Italian—a greasy ding and dago. That man I was talking about was my father and the young boy was me. I thought that we had moved on from there and that Italians would not now, at any stage, be spoken to in a derogatory manner. The minister has chosen his words very carefully tonight. If the audience had been here on other days, or even at question time today when he accused the member for West Swan of needing to get outside her tribe, how derogatory could that be? We Italians are now a tribe, are we? The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, who believes in a harmonious society of all cultures agreeing to behave in a harmonious way, decides to call Italians “tribes”. What about the “siphon” comment when the minister accused certain people in the Italian community of siphoning funds, which led to an editorial in *The West Australian*. That was incredibly damaging —

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Madam Acting Speaker, I have not asked them for interjections.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr P. Papalia: We have all been called three times.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, are you criticising the Chair? Because you are on three calls.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I thought that we had moved on and would not see Italians being spoken about in a negative manner in the newspaper.

Mr A. Krsticevic: They were not!

Dr A.D. BUTI: If they were not spoken about negatively in the newspaper, why did *The West Australian* apologise? Why did it publish an apology if Italians were not spoken about in a derogatory manner?

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Minister!

Dr A.D. BUTI: *The West Australian* decided to write the editorial based on positions and language that had been utilised by the minister. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests should be ashamed of himself in that he developed an environment in which the number one newspaper in Western Australia wrote an editorial that was incredibly damaging to the Italian community of Western Australia, which led to an apology. To get an apology from a newspaper is a massive effort. Of course it tells us that it wrote about Italians in a derogatory manner.

Another thing is that the member for Swan Hills said that now Italians would want to help themselves. Italians have been helping themselves since they came to Australia. The Italian government has been funding this program to a significant extent. Can the minister name all the other overseas governments that are funding other language programs in Western Australia? There may be some, but I bet there are not many. As the member for Girrawheen mentioned to the minister, the statistics tell him that the Italian population of Western Australia is incredibly large—much larger than many of the other ethnic and community groups in Western Australia. He is therefore not comparing apples with apples. The minister cannot say that all groups should get the same amount of money, because there is no historical or statistical basis for that. Also, the Italian program, as the minister himself said, has been incredibly successful. What did the minister do? He destroyed that successful language program. He should not do that. If he wants to improve the other language programs, he should improve them, but not by destroying the one that has been successful.

I am sure that members of the National Party would argue, as most people would, that the royalties for regions program has been incredibly successful. Does that provide an argument for putting money into another area? It does not mean that we destroy something that has been successful; we find a way to fund the other programs. We do not destroy something that historically has been incredibly important to the Italian community and to the wider community, because not only Italians, but also Western Australians are taking up the Italian language. The minister stands condemned for telling the member for West Swan today to get out of and move away from her tribe. What a disgraceful comment to be made by any member of this house, and particularly by the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. As to his other comments about siphoning money, which led to the negative editorial in *The West Australian*—what a disgrace! The minister stands condemned. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests should resign over his behaviour in this area, and the other members who wish to support him should also look at their so-called moral strength.

The member for Balcatta, who has a large Italian population in his electorate, has remained silent on this matter. We look forward to him voting with us on the motion. Before I conclude, it is interesting to note the culture and language diversity in the mix of people in the electorate of Riverton, which the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests represents. It includes 24.8 per cent English, 20.5 per cent Australian, 12.5 per cent Chinese, 5.7 per cent Scottish, and 5.4 per cent Irish, with only 67 people verified as having an Italian

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background and another 400-odd with an Italian name. I wonder whether this decision would have been made had his electorate included 12 per cent Italians.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [5.53 pm] — in reply: I want to close this debate by reflecting on some of the comments made tonight. The Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests had the opportunity to apologise to the Italian community for comments such as “siphoning off” and to condemn *The West Australian* for the comment that Italians have been getting away with it for years. He refused to do so. He did not acknowledge the key issue that we raised in this debate—that is, why completely destroy a program that is working? He refused to acknowledge that. He refused to acknowledge how a program can be continued once the key fabric of it is destroyed. He refused to acknowledge the contribution of the Italian government over years. He refused to acknowledge that part of the report. He did not come into Parliament prepared to tell us exactly what happened in the process of that report. As the member for Girrawheen stated, a lot of push polling was done on stakeholder surveys. A draft report made no recommendation and then the minister’s agency made sure that the report stated what the minister wanted. The minister confirmed that for three years now he has been wanting to tear away that money.

A premeditated attack was made on this program. Nothing the minister said today justified tearing down this program. Some members who stood and spoke, particularly the member for Morley, do not understand that the government is ripping away all the money from the program. The minister did not rebut or go through the arguments I put that the minister’s agency made sure that the report recommended what the minister wanted. It was a sham! In relation to the consultation, the minister again basically said that the Italian community had been well consulted. That is not true. We saw a draft ministerial statement that had been prepared for him, saying that he intended to cut the program before he sat down and met with the Italian community. That is the time frame. The minister did not consult properly. Now he stands and says that he wants to work with the Italian community. He has got to be kidding! He has put out tweets saying how good the editorial in *The West Australian* is. That is what he is doing. He is basically out there, and I have seen him with other community groups, saying, “We’re taking the money from the Italians so we can fund you.” If that is not pitting culture against culture, what is? The minister did not rebut anything we said. The minister talked about per capita funding for new programs at \$100 a head, when he was funding the Italian language program at \$35 a head. Talk about value-for-money arguments! The minister was funding a program at \$35 a head and getting a great outcome and will now fund a program at \$100 a head.

The minister did not adequately address the issue. He had the chance to apologise. He did not apologise. This is a bad decision for Western Australia; it is bad for our Italian community, it is bad for our teaching community, and it is bad for the children of Western Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Minister, the mover of the motion has spoken. The debate is now closed.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members of the gallery, please do not hang over the rails and no photographing, thank you.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Dr A.D. Buti
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr F.M. Logan

Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr M.P. Murray
Mr P. Papalia
Mr J.R. Quigley

Ms M.M. Quirk
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr P.B. Watson

Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 22 April 2015]
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Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Frank Alban; Ms Simone McGurk; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Margaret Quirk; Deputy Speaker; Mr Jan Norberger; Mr Ian Britza; Dr Tony Buti

Noes (31)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr M.J. Cowper
Mr J.H.D. Day
Ms W.M. Duncan

Ms E. Evangel
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr C.D. Hatton
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr S.K. L'Estrange

Mr R.S. Love
Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Ms L. Mettam
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr N.W. Morton
Dr M.D. Nahan

Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr J. Norberger
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mrs M.H. Roberts
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms L.L. Baker
Ms J. Farrer

Mr J.M. Francis
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Ms M.J. Davies
Mr A.P. Jacob

Question thus negatived.

Sitting suspended from 6.01 to 7.00 pm