

## **Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett JP Ahmadiyya Muslim Community WA Australia Day Service 25 January 2026**

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Good Evening!

I am delighted to be here today with my wife Patricia and Councillors and staff from the City of Cockburn and the Deputy Mayor of the City of Fremantle, Fedele Camarda, to join with you in celebrating Australia Day.

I acknowledge the Whadjup people of the Nyungar Nation the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we have gathered today, and I pay my respect to their Elders past and present and I extend that respect to First Nation people with us this evening.

I acknowledge:

- Imam Syed Wadood Janud; Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Perth;
- Mr Anjum Qaisrani, President, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Perth;
- Senator Dorinda Cox,
- Other Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen and the boys who have joined us today.

The Australia Day Council states that Australia Day is the day to reflect on what it means to be Australian, to celebrate contemporary Australia and to acknowledge our history.

As we know Australia has a very complex history and efforts to reconcile our past continue as we share opportunities to build a stronger and more resilient future that we can all acknowledge going forward.

The City of Cockburn has had a Reconciliation Action Plan since 2011.

As part of our Reconciliation Action Plan we focus on respect for the local Nyungar people and for an understanding of the culture and history of the broader First Nations people.

Tomorrow I will welcome 128 new citizens from 33 different countries to our City as they take their pledge.

And across Australia today, more than 19,00 people from over 150 countries have been invited to become citizens, at one of 325 ceremonies being held across the country.

My family first arrived in Botany Bay, New South Wales in 1817 not long after the First Fleets arrival in 1788.

They were involved with the early exploration of New South Wales - over the Blue Mountains and into the hinterland and on several occasions their lives were saved by the Aboriginal trackers who led them to water and food sources.

By all accounts they got on very well with the Aboriginal community, and I think that has travelled down the generations – as I have an enduring and strong relationship with Aboriginal people.

Last year I spoke on the theme ‘Unity’ and recounted the story titled ‘Raindrop’.

One year on the need for Unity is ever present in our community, indeed in communities across the world.

Tonight, I recount a fable titled ‘The Bridge’

Once upon a time two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict.

It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side.

They had been sharing machinery; trading labour and goods as needed without a hitch.

Then the long collaboration fell apart.

It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference which exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on the elder brother’s door.

He opened it to find a man with a carpenter’s toolbox.

“I am looking for a few days of work”, he said.

“Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there.

Could I help you?”

“Yes!” said the elder brother.

“I do have a job for you.

Look across the creek at that farm.

That’s my neighbour, in fact, it’s my younger brother and we don’t get along.

Last week he dug a wider passage for water into his farm.

But he ended up creating a very wide creek in between our farms and I am sure he did it just to annoy me.

I want you to build me something so that we don’t have to stand and see each other’s face from across.”

The carpenter said “I think I understand the situation.

I will be able to do a job that will please you.”

The elder brother had to go to town for supplies, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day.

The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing.

At sunset when the elder brother returned, the carpenter had just finished his job.

The elder brother’s eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped.

It was not what he had even thought of or imagined.

It was a bridge stretching from one side of the creek to the other!

A fine piece of work, beautiful handrails.

And to his surprise, his younger brother across the creek was coming to meet him with a big smile and arms wide open to hug him.

“You are really kind and humble my brother!

After all I had done and said to you, you still shown that blood relations can never be broken!

I am truly sorry for my behaviour”, the younger brother said as he hugged his elder brother.

They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder.

“No, wait!

Stay a few days. I have a lot of other projects for you,” said the older brother.

“I’d love to stay on”, the carpenter said, “but, I have many more bridges to build!”

**Moral: There is no shame in accepting your mistake or forgiving each other.**

**We should be kind and humble. We should try to stay together as a family and not break away from it over the petty arguments.**

Ladies and gentlemen, there is power in each of us to achieve things beyond our imaging.

A power that is at its best and brightest when many become one.

Our greatest strength is in each other.

May the unity we share continue to be the spirit of what makes us truly special.

We have come here today in unity, to join in the conversation and reflect on our shared histories, contributions and achievements as a progressive society that continues to mature, learn from the past and importantly support each other.

On behalf of the City of Cockburn, I thank the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community WA for bringing us together at this Australia Day event and for their significant and on-going contribution to our community.

Your dedication to promoting peace, interfaith dialogue, and service to humanity are highly valued and appreciated.

Thank you!