

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP

NAIDOC Week Address

Lakeland Senior High School

10.00am, Wednesday 28 June, 2017

Kaya

Wonju, Wonju, Beeliar Boodja

Hello and welcome to the land of the Beeliar People.

I acknowledge the Whadjuk People of the Nyungar Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today and I pay respect to their Elders both past and present and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I acknowledge:

....., A/Principal, Lakeland Senior High School;

Teachers, Administrative and other staff at Lakeland Senior High School;

Salome Candy, Chaplain Lakeland Senior High School;

Invited guests,

My wife Patricia and our granddaughter Brooke;

Students;

Parents, carers, friends of the Lakeland Senior High School community.

The 2017 National NAIDOC theme – Our Language Matters is a poignant reminder that no matter where we were born that language matters.

It matters that wherever possible we ensure

So does

Citizenship Ceremonies – Reverend Sealin Garlett

Reconciliation Week
NAIDOC Week

2017 National NAIDOC Theme - Our Languages Matter

The importance, resilience and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages will be the focus of national celebrations marking NAIDOC Week 2017.

The 2017 theme - *Our Languages Matter* - aims to emphasise and celebrate the unique and essential role that Indigenous languages play in cultural identity, linking people to their land and water and in the transmission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, spirituality and rites, through story and song.

Some 250 distinct Indigenous language groups covered the continent at first (significant) European contact in the late eighteenth century. Most of these languages would have had several dialects, so that the total number of named varieties would have run to many hundreds.

Today only around 120 of those languages are still spoken and many are at risk of being lost as Elders pass on.

National NAIDOC Committee Co-Chair Anne Martin said languages are the breath of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the theme will raise awareness of the status and importance of Indigenous languages across the country.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait languages are not just a means of communication, they express knowledge about everything: law, geography, history, family and human relationships, philosophy, religion, anatomy, childcare, health, caring for country, astronomy, biology and food.

“Each language is associated with an area of land and has a deep spiritual significance and it is through their own languages, that Indigenous nations maintain their connection with their ancestors, land and law,” Ms Martin said.

Committee Co-Chair Benjamin Mitchell hopes that the theme will shine a spotlight on the programs and community groups working to preserve, revitalise or record Indigenous languages, and encourage all Australians to notice the use of Indigenous languages in their community.

“There is currently a wave of activity, with people in many communities working to learn more about their language, and to ensure they are passed on to the next generation before it is too late.’ Mr Mitchell said.

“Nationally, many place names for our suburbs, rivers, mountains and parks are Indigenous language words. Noticing and paying attention to these words will generate greater appreciation and respect for the significance of language among all Australians.

"The preservation and revitalisation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages - the original languages of this nation - is the preservation of priceless treasure, not just for Indigenous peoples, but for everyone."