

Speech by Logan K Howlett JP
NAIDOC Flag Raising Ceremony
Monday, 23 August 2021

Kaya Wonju.

Hello and Welcome to the City of Cockburn Annual NAIDOC Flag Raising Ceremony for 2021 with the theme; “Heal Country”.

I thank Mitchell Garlett for his inspiring Welcome to Country, his sharing of the Nyungar culture and the dream time stories that have been handed down through the generations that reflect the customs and practices of the longest surviving culture and people in the world.

I acknowledge the Whadjup people of the Nyungar nation the traditional custodians of the land we are gathered on today and I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Islander people who are with us today.

I acknowledge the presence of:

- My wife Patricia;
- Cr Chontelle Stone;
- Cr Phoebe Corke;
- Mr Tony Brun, Chief Executive Officer of the City, members of the Executive and other staff members;
- Mr Mitchell Garlett;
- Mr Oral McGuire;
- Mr Tim Kelly;
- Members of the Aboriginal Reference Group;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members; and
- Members of the community.

NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Given the impacts of COVID – 19 events celebrating the occasion have commenced across communities.

This year’s NAIDOC theme is - Heal Country! - Calls for stronger measures to recognise, protect, and maintain all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

Healing Country means hearing those pleas to provide greater management, involvement, and empowerment by Indigenous peoples over country.

It’s embracing First Nation’s cultural knowledge and understanding of Country as part of Australia’s national heritage and equally respect the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as they do the cultures and values of all Australians.

To Heal Country, we must properly work towards redressing historical injustice.

While we can't change history, however through telling the truth about our nation's past we certainly can change the way history is viewed.

Healing Country is more than changing a word in our national anthem – it is about the historical, political, and administrative landscapes adapting to successfully empower and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, nations, and heritage.

We are all looking for significant and lasting change.

We cannot afford to let pass the very real opportunity that now presents itself for reform based on a fundamental change in the relationship Australia has with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In closing, I take this opportunity to recognise and congratulate Gubbi Gubbi artist Maggie – Jean Douglas for her design of the 2021 National NAIDOC Poster 'Care for Country'.

Described by the NAIDOC Week Committee as a bright and vibrant artwork that explores how Country has cared for and healed First Nations people spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially and culturally.

The artwork includes communities, people, animals and bush medicines spread over different landscapes of red dirt, green grass, bush land and coastal areas to tell the story of the many ways Country can and has healed us throughout our lives and journeys.

It is an amazing poster.

Heal Country, Heal our Nation.

Thank you.