

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP
City of Cockburn,
Reconciliation Week Flag Raising Ceremony
27 May, 2019

Kaya

Wonju Wonju, Beeliar Boodjah.

Hello and welcome to the land of the Beeliar People.

I thank Robyn Collard for her welcoming and meaningful 'Welcome to Country' sharing her knowledge and understanding of the dreamtime stories passed down through the generations.

Please know that Marie Taylor was unable to be with us today due to the loss of a family member. Marie is held in high regard by our community and we stand with the family at this sad moment in time.

On behalf of elected members and staff of the City of Cockburn I warmly welcome everyone to this year's Reconciliation Week Flag Raising ceremony.

I acknowledge the Wadjuk people of the Nyungar Nation the Traditional Custodians of this Land, and I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging and extend that respect to Indigenous Australians with us today.

I acknowledge the presence of:

- My wife Patricia;
- Mr Don Green, Director Governance & Community Services;
- Mr Daniel Arndt, Director Planning & Development;
- other members of staff here today;
- Members of the Aboriginal Reference Group;
- Staff and Students from Perth Waldorf School;
- Staff and Students from Fremantle College and;
- other school representatives that are here today; and
- Members of our community.

National Reconciliation Week is held annually between **May 27 and June 3**.

The theme for this year is **'Grounded in Truth; Walk Together with Courage'**.

At the heart of reconciliation is the relationship between the broader Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To foster positive race relations, our relationship must be grounded in a foundation of truth.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long called for a comprehensive process of truth-telling about Australia's colonial history.

Our nation's past is reflected in the present, and will continue to play out in future unless we heal historical wounds.

According to the 2018 Australian Reconciliation Barometer, a report which is released every year, 80 per cent of Australians believe it is important to undertake a process of truth-telling about Australia's colonial history and people's real stories.

This journey requires all of us to walk together with courage. This is what we need to do in order to continue towards a unified future, in which we understand, value and respect each other.

We at the City of Cockburn, continue to work alongside our local Aboriginal community, through the actions identified in our 3rd Reconciliation Action Plan.

The concept plan for the City's proposed Aboriginal Cultural and Visitors Centre at Bibra Lake is currently being developed, and we hope this will become a place for the Aboriginal community to meet, for visitors to come and learn about Nyungar culture, for meaningful relationships to be built, and truthful stories to be told.

On my father's side of the family we have been present in Australia since 1817, just over 200 years ago.

They (three brothers) arrived in Sydney Cove, New South Wales aboard the ship, Larkins. They were convicts from Cambridge in England with

one eventually marrying a female convict who had arrived on the Larkins as well.

From all accounts they settled into Australia quite well and became involved in some of the early exploration journeys through the Blue Mountains and on into the 'interior'.

The Aboriginal guides ensured the success of many of those journeys knowing the sources of both food and water and shelter through the unforgiving bushland.

The brothers also worked on farmland in what is inner Sydney today. They went on to own their own farms in due course – a return for them to the days spent on their parents farm in Cambridge before being 'transported' to Australia.

And so it is that since white man's settlement in Australia some 230 years ago we have managed to have a profound negative impact on the environment.

We have managed to clear large sections of our land, to pollute our rivers, lakes and even the ocean. In some cases, such as the Murray/Darling Rivers we have seen them virtually run dry.

To me personally this is the 'greed' factor and if not addressed it will have dire consequences for our future.

As we continue to search for the ways and means to reverse these actions, we can and should reflect back on how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as custodians of the land, managed to keep the balance between their interactions and Mother Nature for over 60,000 years.

The students here today will be acutely aware of the issue of Climate Change. More and more the younger generation are seeing this as a 'tipping point' that will impact their future and those who follow in their footsteps.

It is pleasing to see and hear these young people standing up for their future, our future, and I commend them for raising the bar and having the conversations that have to be had.

In closing, thank you for attending today's Reconciliation Flag Raising event and we look forward to acknowledging and celebrating Reconciliation Week in the days ahead.

Please look out for the Reconciliation Week banners up around the City during this time.

Thank you.