

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP
City of Cockburn Australia Day Coogee Beach Festival
Thursday 26 January, 2021

Kaya, Wonju Wonju Beeliar Boodjar (Hello, Welcome to the land of the Beeliar people) and to the City of Cockburn's Australia Day Coogee Beach Festival.

On behalf of Council, I thank Marie Taylor for the 'Welcome to Country' and her sharing of aspects of the Nyungar culture that reflect the importance of the land in which we live and the need to protect and promote the natural beauty of Beeliar Boodjar (the land of the Beeliar People).

I acknowledge the Whadjuk People of the Nyungar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered today and I pay respect to their Elders both past and present and I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are with us today.

I welcome our special guests today including:

- my wife Patricia;
- Deputy Mayor Lara Kirkwood and her partner Bruce;
- Councillor Chontelle Stone and her partner David;
- Councillor Michael Separovich;
- Councillor Tom Widenbar and his wife Jessica;
- Mrs Marie Taylor, Nyungar Elder who presented today's 'Welcome to Country';
- Australia Day Ambassador Julian Pace representing the Australia Day Council;
- The City of Cockburn Events Team led by Marie La Frenais who have coordinated today's Coogee Beach Festival;
- The performers here today to entertain and engage you;
- The Friends of the Community who provided volunteering services throughout the year raising funds to 'give back' to the community;
- Members of the Cockburn State Emergency Services who are assisting today in car parking arrangements; •
- Members of the South Coogee Bush Fire Brigade here today providing advice on how to protect your home from bush fire attack;

- Representatives from Neighbourhood Watch who are providing car licence plate lockable screws free of charge;
- Other volunteers here today that pursue their passions throughout the year; •
- Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Today, Australia Day, we acknowledge that some people have mixed feelings about celebrating this day. January 26th has different meanings for people – for some it is a day of celebrating being Australian, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders it can be a painful reminder of the day that European people arrived on this land and began the process of colonization and the resulting negative impact on their culture, language, family and community.

The National Australia Day Council has stated that our national day can be a time where we ‘celebrate and mourn at the same time and we can honour all that is great about Australia and being Australian, remember the sufferings and our shortcomings; and commit to build a more cohesive and inclusive nation’.

The City of Cockburn also commits to this on this day.

I want you to take some time and think about how fortunate we are to be here today celebrating with family and friends in a diverse and multi-cultural community that embraces our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, heritage and culture and that of those who have come here over time from the four corners of the Earth to make this, the place they call, home.

Today is an ideal time for everyone to join the conversation and reflect on our shared histories, contributions and achievements as a tolerant and progressive society.

During my 48 years as a resident of Cockburn and serving as your Mayor for almost twelve years, I have seen the rapid growth of our City to where it has a population of nearly 120,000 and growing to 170,000 or more in coming years.

We are a progressive community that is taking steps to reconcile our past and to embrace our future for the benefit of all Australians. We have come a long way, and although there is still much to be done, we have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to moving forward and creating a place that people are proud to call home.

Today I will welcome 80 new citizens to our City who will make their pledge to Australia and its people.

I have the pleasure of welcoming these new citizens into our community and seeing first-hand the pride it brings them to call Australia home and themselves becoming 'Australians' citizens for the first time.

Today's event continues to be a day to reflect on our achievements and recommit to making this country a great place to live for many generations to come.

I look around me and am grateful that my grandchildren will be a part of a national community that is diverse, welcoming, and respectful of all cultures.

It gives me great pleasure to know that we are creating a legacy where people can live happily and peacefully alongside each other and openly share this great nation of ours with newcomers from the four corners of the Earth.

On behalf of the City of Cockburn I trust that you enjoy today's events; and remember how lucky we all are to call ourselves Australians?

Happy Australia Day!

Thank you.