

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP

Australia Day 2020 Nasir Mosque - Bibra Lake

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Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

As always, I am delighted to be here tonight with my wife Patricia and Councillor Philip Eva JP and his wife Michele representing the City of Cockburn.

I acknowledge the Whadjup people of the Nyungar Nation the traditional custodians of the land on which we have gathered tonight and I pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be with us today.

I acknowledge:

- Imam Kamran Tahir, Imam Perth, WA
- Rashid Waqas, President, WA
- Councillor Philip Eva JP and his wife Michele;
- My wife Patricia;
- Other distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

As we gather here today to reflect on what Australia Day means to each of us; every person will have a different point of view. 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 progressive society.

We are all aware of the COVID – 19 Pandemic that has impacted our world communities – perhaps the biggest challenge that any of us has had to face in our life time.

While we learn more about the pandemic each day and the fact that vaccines are now being rolled out across the world it remains uncertain as to whether they will be effective.

Importantly the challenge is for an even distribution of the vaccines to all communities given the fact that many third world countries are not in a position to fund the vaccine programs.

Our nation, along with many others continue to experience natural disasters with increasing frequency and severity; whether it be torrential rain, hail stones, dust storms, floods fire, cyclones or tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and the like.

An increasing number of people say it is linked to climate change while others refute those claims.

Whatever the reason, it is on these occasions, where the spirit of a nation comes to the fore, people helping others, reaching out to communities, embracing the need to support those impacted and setting about raising funds.

So it will be the same for the COVID – 19 Pandemic where we will come to the fore again – for the sake of humanity.

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.

Earlier today I welcomed nearly 80 new citizens to our City who made their pledge to Australia and its people.

Across Australia 26,000 made that pledge I had 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.

Today provides an opportunity 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 thank the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community WA for bringing us together on Australia Day and for their significant on-going contribution to our community.

Thank you.