

Speech delivered by
Deputy Mayor Carol Reeve-Fowkes

NAIDOC WEEK

Flag Raising Ceremony

9.30am, Tuesday 7 July 2015

Good morning.

I extend to you all a very warm welcome to the City of Cockburn's NAIDOC WEEK Flag-Raising Ceremony, which symbolises the commencement of NAIDOC WEEK celebrations.

I thank Marie Taylor for her traditional 'Welcome to Country' and for all the work that she is doing in our community and further afield.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land that we stand on today, the Nyungar people and I pay respect to the Elders both past and present of the Nyungar nation and extend that respect too all Indigenous Australians who are present here today.

I especially welcome:

- Marie Taylor and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and their People who are with us today;
- The Chair and other members of the City's Aboriginal Reference Group;
- Mr Stephen Cain, CEO and other members of the Executive Team, and other members of staff;
- Representatives from organisations and community groups;
- Ladies and Gentlemen, girls and boys.

Our Mayor, Logan Howlett is an apology for this part of today's proceeding due to the funeral service for one of his aunties.

NAIDOC WEEK Celebrations are held across Australia each July to highlight the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to acknowledge their contribution to making Australia such a great place to live and raise a family.

This is an important time for all Australians as we acknowledge and celebrate the survival of our country's rich Indigenous heritage and culture.

It is also a time to recognise the significant contribution of Indigenous people to modern Australia and the journey that we are all taking to make a better Australia.

Every year a different theme is decided on for NAIDOC WEEK.

The theme for 2015 is:

We All Stand On Sacred Ground

Learn, Respect and Celebrate

This year the theme highlights Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' strong spiritual and cultural connection to land and sea.

The theme is an opportunity to pay respects to country; honour those who work tirelessly on preserving land, sea and culture and to share the stories of many sites of significance or sacred places with the nation.

As the oldest continuing culture on the planet, the living culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is intrinsically linked with these sacred places.

Sacred places can be geographic feature like a river or lake, a beach, bays, inlets, hills or a mountain ranges or ceremonial grounds, galleries of rock art or engravings or places used for gathering for cultural practices.

Long before European arrival, these places had traditional names - names that now reflect the timeless relationship between the people and the land.

Often sacred places are connected with Dreaming stories or tell of the meaning of an area.

This year's theme was also chosen specifically to highlight and celebrate the anniversary of the 'Handback' of Uluru, one of these sacred sites, to its traditional owners [on 26 October, 30](#) years ago.

The National NAIDOC Committee encourages all Australians - young and old - to embrace the 2015 National NAIDOC theme.

It is with this in mind, that the City has organised a range of events to engage our community during this week of celebration.

From the Deadly Moves Youth Event held on Thursday night 2 July, to yesterday's Lunch & Listen with Nyungar Leader Oral McGuire including delicious damper and quandong jam), to today's Flag Raising Ceremony followed by the unveiling of recent Nyungar paintings acquired by the City, to morning tea and then lunch in the Seniors Centre there is an opportunity for all of us to stand side by side on the journey of reconciliation.

There is also a range of cultural events in our libraries during the school holidays where children can further explore the culture, dance to the didgeridoo and listen to some great story telling.

The City has endorsed its 2nd Reconciliation Action Plan through to 2016.

Our City, in consultation with our Aboriginal Reference Group is leading in the development and implementation of Reconciliation Action Plans across Australia.

Together, we have clearly articulated the journey in front of us and demonstrated our sincere commitment to building strong and respectful relationships.

Events such as NAIDOC WEEK are an important part of our City's Reconciliation Action Plan. The event grows in stature each year and reflects our desire for genuine collaboration and shared outcomes.

If you would like to know more please look on the City's website or speak with our Aboriginal Community Development Officer Sam Mourish.

It is with great pleasure that I now declare the City of Cockburn's NAIDOC WEEK celebrations officially open, and thank you for being here today to share in this very special moment!

I look forward to the conversations that we will have today and importantly going forward as we walk side by side, shoulder to shoulder on a journey of understanding, respect, tolerance and action to 'Close the Gap'.

Thank you.

