

**Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett, JP**

**City of Cockburn**

**Australia Day Coogee Beach Festival**

**Thursday 26 January, 2017**

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Kaya, Wanju Wanju 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 Betty Garlett 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.

I extend that respect to Indigenous Australians who are with us today, and in particular, members of the City's Aboriginal Reference Group.

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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 welcome our special guests today including:

- My wife Patricia and our granddaughter Caitlin;
- Betty Garlett, Nyungar Elder who presented today's 'Welcome to Country';
- Members of the City's Aboriginal Reference Group;
- Australia Day Ambassador and Olympic synchronised swimmer, Deborah Tsai,
- Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys.

The first recorded Australia Day celebrations were held on January 26, 1808 to mark 20 years since Captain Arthur Phillip raised the flag at Sydney Cove.

Since then, there has been much controversy about this day and how we choose to acknowledge and celebrate it.

For today I would like you to focus on the present and consider what it means to be an Australian.

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.

In November this year, on my father's side of the family, we celebrate 200 years in Australia.

The ship Larkins arrived in New South Wales on 22 November 1817 with 250 convict passengers of whom were three brothers, James, Thomas and William Howlett, all convicted in Cambridge, England – one receiving 7 years gaol and transportation to Australia and the other two having their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment and transportation to Australia.

The sons of farmers in Cambridge, England each went on to receive their pardons and to eventually own farming properties in New South Wales.

During my 44 years as a resident of Cockburn and serving as your Mayor for the past eight years, I have seen the rapid growth of our City to where it has a population of 110,000 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 100 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' 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.

Thank you.