Kaya

I acknowledge the Whadjup people of the Nyungar Nation the traditional custodian of the land on which we are gathered and I pay respect to their Elders, past, present and future.

I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people who are here tonight and to those unable to attend.

The City of Cockburn condemns any and every form of systemic racism, and stands alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our nation to ensure that it is stamped out at every opportunity.

We have and continue to have a strong relationship with the Elders and other members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

From a personal perspective, my Father’s side of the family arrived in New South Wales in 1817. Three convict brothers who had received a reprieve from the death penalty for what would be described as petty theft in today’s world. Their final sentence was seven years jail for one and life imprisonment for the other two and their friend. The words that still ring in my ears from the moment I read the court transcripts – “And transportation to Australia.”

They all went on to receive their pardons and to own farming properties just outside Sydney and by all accounts they got on very well with the local Aboriginal community who on several occasions saved their lives when trekking to the other side of the Blue Mountains and becoming lost with diminishing supplies of food and water.

The City of Cockburn adopted its first Reconciliation Action Plan in 2011 and since then has progressively worked with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to bring about cultural change in all that the City does – whether it be Citizenship Ceremonies, Acknowledge of Country at all Council and Committee meetings, activities associated with NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, fairs and cultural days, the employment of staff, volunteer awards and the like.

We know that the City of Cockburn is a multi-cultural society with people coming to our shores from the four corners of the earth.

Many of these people have suffered injustices in the places they were born and have arrived in Australia seeking a better place to live, to raise and educate their families, to join in and share the traditional foods, music, song and dance; and to be able to practice their religion in a quiet and respectful manner.

It is with this thought that the Council will be considering an Agenda Item tonight that cultural awareness training for all elected members and executive staff be conducted by December 2020 and thereafter the training becomes a part of the on-going training of Elected Members and the Executive staff every two years thereby following the local government election cycle.

As you will be aware the Council will be receiving a deputation at tonight’s meeting on the challenges of systemic racism.

Following a meeting with representatives of the Aboriginal Reference Group we have only this afternoon been able to secure a meeting with the Minister for Local Government’s Office to address this very issue.

That meeting will take place on Tuesday, 21 July 2020.

Thank you.