

City of Cockburn RECONCILIATION WEEK 2013

Speech: Mayor Logan Howlett

Wednesday 29 May 2013

Good morning and welcome to the City of Cockburn and in particular to one of the many events being held during National Reconciliation Week which runs from Monday 27 May to Monday 3 June 2013.

The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey:

May 27 marks the anniversary of the 1967 referendum in which over 90 per cent of Australians voted to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them in the national census.

On 3 June, 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision which legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a special relationship to the land—that existed prior to colonisation and still exists today. This recognition paved the way for land rights called Native Title.

One highlight of the week will be the launch of the Journey to Recognition, Australia's largest ever relay across the whole continent to build momentum for recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution.

I thank Noel Morrison for his 'Welcome to Country' and for his continuing contribution to the Cockburn and wider community.

I acknowledge the Nyungar people who are the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet today.

I pay my respects to the Elders both past and present, and also extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are here today.

I acknowledge the presence of:

- Mr Noel Morrison;

- Reverend Sealin Garlett;
- Mr Charlie Kickett;
- The City of Cockburn Aboriginal Reference Group
- The Walyalup Reconciliation Group
- Mr Don Green, Director Governance and Community Services

Today is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on our shared histories, contributions and achievements.

It is also a time to celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

At the City of Cockburn, we have a developed and built on a number of opportunities to build strong and real relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through:

- Our Aboriginal Reference Group which meets monthly and has been doing so since 2002;
- Aboriginal staff employed at the City. We now have 12 Aboriginal employees here at City of Cockburn;
- The Kwoborup Aboriginal Program through Cockburn Community Care;
- The 'My Time' Aboriginal parents and grandparents group run weekly at the Coolbellup Hub;
- The Co-Health physical activity and healthy lifestyle programs and camps. The Co-Health Program will today be providing free Health Screenings in the Seniors Centre and especially encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in this program.

The Events that the City provides, including Apology Day, Close the Gap, NAIDOC week, and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Children's Day in August and last but not least, the City's

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – we are just coming to the end of our first 2nd year RAP, and are close to finalising our second RAP which will take us through to 2016.

Cockburn’s vision for reconciliation is to create an inclusive community with strong relationships across cultures based on mutual respect and understanding.

The RAP is considered to be a “live” document such that it will require regular review and reporting on progress towards addressing each of the initiatives.

We have achieved a lot through this process, and today you can see the range of actions and programs on display in the Seniors Centre hall.

Reconciliation is a process of change and of coming to terms with the history of our country.

It requires us to challenge our beliefs, our world view and our understanding of different cultures.

We are using our RAP to help guide us through this process of change, and we welcome staff at the City, residents, community groups and organisations to join us in the reconciliation journey.

Our actions will contribute to the goal of “closing the gap” between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians so that all people can be valued and participate fully in the Cockburn community.

Other practical outcomes of the RAP include:

- community events and concerts with an Indigenous focus;
- an annual cultural bus tour;
- celebrating of Indigenous heritage through the local historical society and Azelia Ley Homestead;
- Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and Development Training for staff;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander oral histories;

- a feasibility study for an Aboriginal Cultural Centre;
- an Aboriginal Employment Strategy;
- programs for Indigenous health and well-being;
- a new award for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student for each school receiving Council's School Graduation Awards.

Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys, I look forward to progressing our partnerships and the opportunity to share in a reconciliation process that is genuine, inclusive and progressive.

I look forward to our conversations over lunch on what each and every one of us can contribute to our understanding of reconciliation and the way forward.

Thank you.