

Hiroshima Day Address

By

Mayor Logan K Howlett

6 August 2012

Good Morning.

I extend a warm welcome to everyone who has gathered here today at the City of Cockburn in commemoration of Hiroshima Day, Monday 6 August 2012.

I acknowledge the Noongar people who are the traditional custodians of the land that we are gathered on this morning and I pay respect to their Elders both past and present and I extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who may be present.

I formally welcome:

- Mr Masahiro Takagi, Deputy of Mission, representing the Consul General of Japan, Perth Western Australia;

Teachers and students from participating schools (Aubin Grove Primary, Beeliar Primary, Bibra Lake, Blue Gum Montessori, Coogee, Coolbellup Community, Kerry Street Community, New Life Christian College, Perth Waldorf, Phoenix, South Coogee, Southwell, Spearwood Alternative, Spearwood, here today;

- Mr Stephen Cain, Chief Executive Officer, City of Cockburn;
- Mr Don Green, Director Community and Administrative Services;
- Members of the City's staff who have co-ordinated today's commemorative service and members of the City's Parks & Gardens Staff who assisted with today's tree planting ceremony; and
- My wife Patricia.

This commemoration ceremony has been held in the City of Cockburn for many years with representatives of the Consul General of Japan and our school communities.

It provides us all with the opportunity to learn from each other - to share in a moment of reflection, of times gone past, of a people and its nation impacted by nuclear warfare – a world impacted by the aftermath – of generations of young people asking why – of trees being planted by children as a mark of respect and remembrance – and just as those trees grow tall and reach for the stars so we support our children as they too grow and aspire to be the leaders of our community, businesses, our defence forces, volunteer movements and importantly to eventually become the mums and dads of our future generations.

Having been to Harmony Reserve earlier this morning to plant a row of trees to commemorate Hiroshima Day I thank Mr Masahiro Takagi for his presence at the tree planting ceremony and for joining us here to share our knowledge, understanding and reflections on the 67th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, August 6 1945.

It is important for all of us to know and understand the circumstances of the bombings that occurred. Hiroshima and then three days later the bombing of Nagasaki – both are grim reminders of the destructive power of nuclear weapons and the impact they can have on individuals, families, communities and nations.

The City of Cockburn is a member of the Mayor's for Peace worldwide movement and fully supports the need for World Peace and how we as a nation can contribute to the wider understanding of resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner as opposed to lives being lost, infrastructure being destroyed and communities left devastated for generations.

As we reflect on Hiroshima Day, I will now read the 'Story of the Peace Crane',

The origami crane has become an international symbol of peace, a Peace Crane, through the sad but inspiring life story of a young Japanese girl named Sadako Sasaki.

Sadako was born in 1943 in Hiroshima, Japan. She was two years old when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, on 6th August 1945.

Following that Sadako seemed to continue growing up well into a happy and healthy girl. In the 6th grade she was one of the fastest runners in her school and her dream was to become a physical education teacher.

But towards the end of November 1954, Sadako caught a little cold and lumps developed on her neck and behind her ears, swelling her face as if she had the mumps.

Sadako was soon diagnosed with Leukemia, which people in Japan called "the atom bomb" disease.

In February she entered the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital.

In August, while in the hospital, she was shown colourful paper cranes and told an old Japanese legend, which said that anyone who folds a thousand paper cranes would be granted a wish.

Sadako hoped that by folding the paper cranes she would get well again. So she began making the cranes and completed over 1000 of them before dying on October 25, 1955 at the age of twelve.

While making the cranes she also wished and helped towards world peace:

"I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world."

(Sadako Sasaki)

Her classmates felt deeply sad to lose their dear friend.

They discussed what they could do for her, and came up with the idea of building a monument to Sadako and all the children killed by the atom bomb.

Young people all over Japan helped collect money for the project.

In 1958, a statue of Sadako holding a golden crane was unveiled in Hiroshima Peace Park.

The children also made a wish that is inscribed at the bottom of the statue and reads:

*"This is our cry,
This is our prayer,
Peace
in the world."*

Since then people all over the world fold paper cranes and send them to the Sadako's monument in Hiroshima, in memory of Sadako and all children killed through wars.

*The story of Sadako and peace monument has inspired many people around the world to work towards world peace and to protect the seriously threatened Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*) on which the origami crane and the Japanese legend are based.*

Cranes are among the species at the top of a wetland ecological pyramid and hence they are more vulnerable to extinction.

Health of the crane population is often a good indicator of the health of the whole wetland ecosystem.

Fulfilment of prayers and wishes for world peace depends on a healthy natural environment. Protecting our natural environment is a sign of true wisdom, since our own health and peace depend on it.

I look to my children and grandchildren, the children here today and throughout our communities – the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should never be repeated in any community – we owe it to ourselves to work towards world peace and a future that is inclusive, tolerant and respectful of the diverse cultures that make up our world.

The economic, cultural and friendship ties that are shared between Australia and Japan can only be further enhanced by demonstrating mutual respect for our individual society's and by our peoples learning more about each other and how we can work together to bring long lasting Peace to the world.

In closing, I request Mr Masahiro Takagi, Deputy of Mission to convey the best wishes of our City to Consul-General Tatsuo Ishikawa – our thoughts are with the Japanese people throughout the world as we come together to commemorate this day.

Thank you!

I now invite Mr Masahiro Takagi, Deputy of Mission, Office of the Consulate-General of Japan in Perth to address those assembled here today.