

Royal Commonwealth Society WA

Commonwealth Youth Harmony Day

**Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC
Governor of Western Australia**

Tuesday, 19th March 2019

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Wadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Thank you to Moorditj Noongar Community College for your welcome to country.

Welcome to the Government House Ballroom. It is a pleasure to gather with you all for this year's Commonwealth Day Youth Harmony Program.

We meet in the shadow of the evil events in Christchurch. We unite in sorrow with the families of the dead and wounded. We agonise with our New Zealand Commonwealth siblings whose community cohesion is legendary but whose confidence now is shattered. Spreading the values that underpin the Commonwealth is an antidote to the gunman's poison.

A week ago (Sunday 10th March) I joined with school students and representatives of many religious faiths at the annual Multi Faith Observance Ceremony, held over the road at St George's Cathedral, to mark Commonwealth Day and to celebrate our diversity.

We joined with people in 52 Commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, the Pacific and Europe who also recognised the day. All over the world, people celebrated through a broad range of important activities, including faith and civic gatherings, debates, school assemblies, flag raising ceremonies and cultural events.

It was also a chance to reflect on 70 years since the formation of the Commonwealth, as it is configured today.

Belonging to the Commonwealth means we are part of a global family of 2.4 billion people who share old and new ties enabling co-operation towards social, political and economic development, which is both inclusive and sustainable.

As most of you will now know, the theme for Commonwealth Day 2019 is 'A Connected Commonwealth', which is described by the Commonwealth Secretariat as an opportunity for,

"...the people, governments and institutions of this richly diverse family of nations to connect and work together at many levels through far-reaching and deep-rooted networks of friendship and goodwill."

Furthermore, the theme:

"...encourages collaboration to protect natural resources and the environment – particularly of the ocean (with the adoption in 2018 of the 'Commonwealth Blue Charter') which connects so many member countries."

Under the Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment there is increased cooperation on trade and investment towards inclusive economic empowerment so that all people, particularly women, youth and marginalised communities, are able to share the fruit of progress and prosperity.”

When it comes to the values of the Commonwealth – promoting development, peace, democracy, tolerance and understanding, in particular respect for other’s cultures – you are the hope of the side. Those values are an antidote to the terrible evil of the perpetrator in the Christchurch massacre. Young people communicate globally in a way adults do not. You can make all the difference.

In her annual Commonwealth Day message, which will be read out shortly, Her Majesty the Queen emphasises that we can, “...*look to the future with confidence and optimism...*” because of the links that we share and the mutual support we contribute to each other.

The Commonwealth reminds us to look outwards – that we each have a role and a responsibility to strive for peace in our world. Making this difference starts at home.

This week is Harmony Week which, along with today, provides great reason to consider how you can celebrate, experience, explore and appreciate our wealth of cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity in your own lives.

Did you know that, according to the 2016 Census, there has been a 16.5 per cent increase in the number of people in WA born overseas since 2011, their share in the total population increasing from 30.7 per cent to 32.2 per cent. The top 10 birthplaces in our State were England, New Zealand, India, South Africa, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, Scotland, Italy and Ireland. More than 240 languages are spoken in Western Australia (including Aboriginal languages).

In closing, I thank the Royal Commonwealth Society WA Branch, the Young Fellows Committee, the winners of the 2018 RCS WA Speech and Leadership Contest, students, teachers, volunteers, and all involved, for working together to arrange this outstanding Youth Harmony Program.

I look forward to the cultural performances we will see shortly and wish everyone an enjoyable afternoon ahead.