Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
Reception: 2019 Winston Churchill Fellowship Awards

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC
Governor of Western Australia

21 November 2019

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

A conversation between the Duke of Edinburgh and Winston Churchill that sparked the idea of a Trust as a lasting memorial to Churchill. From there, the fellowships arose.

In this country, launched by Prime Minister Menzies, funds were raised to support our participation in a fellowship scheme which has underpinned advancing the skills, minds and engagement of many of our most creative people. They are of community building and nation building value.

There is an irony here. Churchill thought Australians hated him. He identified Gallipoli in WWI, and Greece and Singapore in WWII as why we might. He was aware in the 1930s of strong Australian Government support for policies of appeasement.

He could not have been more wrong. Across this nation he was held in highest regard. He was perceived as a man who saved the honour of the Empire and a man who preserved freedom and democracy as the core features of decency in political arrangements globally.

This has been a red letter year in selection here in WA. Commonly there are 9-12 awardees and this year we have 14 [Note 14 awardees in 2018 too]. The awardees represent the breadth of skills the fellowship has traditionally attracted, and share a common theme of seeking to advance our wellbeing and society at large. This is high order community building.

While a community interest is being served here by the knowledge brought back, it is also a reward for those already achieving. People who have received Churchills over the years are already community leaders, in many cases, role models for their peers. As a reward, the Churchills encourage community, social, cultural, political, law enforcement and scientific leadership.

They are timely now. We are conscious in this community that our environment is changing rapidly. That challenges are fast rising and we need to adjust and hopefully lead. We are in the middle of the fourth industrial revolution, as artificial intelligence and associated technologies create both threat and opportunity.

- Power equations are shifting massively economically.
  I remember when I was responsible for the Defence White Paper in 1987 our GDP was bigger than ASEAN's combined and 70% of China's. Now Indonesia alone will pass us in the next few years.

- Environmental challenges likewise.

For our region for example, the risk to flows down the critical Mekong and Brahmaputra rivers are massive. They rise in Tibet and are increasingly being diverted to China's drying river systems. In 20-30 years if trends continue the result in our immediate neighbourhood could be catastrophic.

- WA and climate change.
  Climate change is not universal in its impact. To some degree, Russia and Canada would benefit with more land open to use. Here, our current regions of habitation like WA's south and Wheatbelt will be badly affected. The rainfall in the north however might well increase turning it into a major agricultural zone.

- Liberal internationalism is seriously challenged.
  The global system is returning to some of the dynamics Churchill would have recognised – force majeure and the creation of facts. Facts are being created in the South China Sea. International norms are more honoured in the breach.

In WA we sit in the middle of the opportunity and the risk that all these trends bring.

We are the globe's largest minerals province – we have all the minerals of the current technologies and all of them of the new metals underpinning the basic building blocks of the fourth industrial revolution. Likewise we are getting better and better at feeding the globe, but must get better still.

We are going to rely on the steady drumroll year after year of the creative folk who win our Churchill's.

Best wishes and congratulations to you all.