

## **Curtin University**

### **Establishment of *The Carrolup Centre for Truth-telling***

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

**Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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

It is an honour to mark this truly special occasion with you all – the establishment of *The Carrolup Centre for Truth-telling*.

This event is significant in so many ways and it really feels like the beginning of a new chapter in what is an immensely powerful gathering. As I look around me there are some very distinguished West Australians here, but there are above all some enormously powerful people from the Noongar community and the Aboriginal community more broadly.

This is a symbol of how things have changed in my lifetime in public life. My lifetime began when the Stolen Generation was still being stolen. My lifetime in politics began with it still in place.

Not only do we find ourselves this year at the start of a new decade, we are also currently celebrating NAIDOC Week – an opportunity for our whole community to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Theirs is the oldest continuous civilisation on earth. We've got to really grip that in our minds. The Aboriginal people in this country are the only people who survived the last great ice age as a civilisational entity. Nobody else did. None of my ancestors did. They survived it because of their fabulous science, astronomy, genetics, engineering, medicine, land management and we are only just beginning to comprehend all of that now. After so many years, the superiority of that civilisation was why that civilisation survived. So into the minds, bodies, genes of all those kids – no matter how shamefully they were treated – went the essence of that brilliance. And we now have the chance to celebrate it but also engage in truth telling about it.

The most moving report I ever had to read as a member of parliament was that into the Stolen Generation. It affected me very deeply at the time because I realised that many of the young people who came to my house when I was a kid – for meals, or visits, as my Dad and Mum would bring folk into the House – I suddenly realised, with a flash of wisdom that the kids who seemed so cheerful that I was playing with,

chatting to – they were stolen. And they were living the youthful experience of the kids who had been stolen and I couldn't bear it.

What the Carrolup artworks do is expose, when you look at them, the souls of a huge number of the kids who were affected and who sought to express themselves, about what they remember of their culture in their young childhood. Six years old, eight years old – they hadn't forgotten, they didn't know the stories but they knew the bodies.

*The Centre of Truth-telling* is a great thing, and will introduce us to an understanding of how Aboriginal people transform and heal communities.

Centres like this are necessary remembrances for present and future generations. We are still the same species that instituted a policy of separating children from their parents. We always need to remember the pain that can be caused by ill-conceived policies, and we must always question the motives behind these policies. We can't afford as a society to become indifferent.

*The Centre for Truth-telling* will help heal wounds that are still open.

This is a Centre of hope; a hope that some extended families of the Stolen Generations can be healed, and a hope for reconciliation for all people.

But it is a lot more than that. We are in the decade before this society will commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of colonisation. It is absolutely critical that over the course of the ten years the story changes and that it becomes a much more rounded out and inclusive commemoration, in particular of the people who took the hit. And the people who took the hit were in the first case the 14 tribes of the Noongar people and the southern Yamatji. It is absolutely crucial that we get an understanding and appreciation of that, incorporating that experience into the memories that must be drawn from.

So congratulations Curtin for what you have done here and what it is that you are doing.

*[Governor turns to Aboriginal Elders on stage behind him]* Thank you for the forgiveness that you all show us by your presence here.