

Australia Day Council WA (Auspire)

Australia Day Launch

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC Governor of Western Australia

Thursday, 21 January 2021

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.

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I join you here today to launch Australia Day festivities for the week ahead. This last year has been a real testing of our community which on the whole, we have come through really well. We have tested the metal of our health responders, our police and military, our logisticians, our education systems and our scientific establishments. So far the outcomes here have been pretty good. I think here too, of the fine job done by our aboriginal communities in protecting themselves in the north and east.

But we are not free of this pandemic. In many ways, we have only just started to take the steps that would come nearest, to freeing us from it. In that process, we rely very heavily on getting access, as rapidly as possible, to the necessary inoculations. It is a race between vaccination and the increasing infectiousness of the virus. What we can say at this point in time is that the country has exercised a level of social discipline that speaks well of us as people and well of us in terms of our care for each other.

It is good to start a new year with a celebration such as this, an event which truly rejoices in extraordinary individuals within our community, the 2021 WA Australian of the Year Award recipients.

Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.

Modern Australia Day prompts a reflection on the fact that there was a continent of first nations Australians who did not think that the arrival of the rest of us was a source of joy. There has been a strong view amongst those who are responsible for organising these functions that respect for Aboriginal people needs to be high on the agenda. The Prime Minister has moved in that direction with a minor but critical alteration of our anthem by removing the word “young” and replacing it with “one”. That acknowledges the fact that we are blessed to share the continent with a civilisation over 60,000 years old. We inhabit the most ancient continent geologically and in civilisation.

This coming Australia Day, all across the country, we **reflect** on our nation’s true history, which began tens of thousands of years ago with the First Australians – the world’s oldest continuous culture – and on the impact that European settlement had on our First Nations people and their way of life.

We **respect** and acknowledge the extensive knowledge of our First Nations people, knowledge of land, sea and sky, which allows them to care for Country as they would a family member.

We **reflect** also on our modern history – the waves of immigration that have shaped us into one of the world's great multicultural success stories.

And we **celebrate** our nation's place in the world – a proud and ancient, multicultural nation built on shared values that allow us to enjoy the freedoms and opportunities that other nations aspire to. We celebrate Country and how the land and sky defines our Australian identity – from the saltwater to the freshwater, from the rainforest to the desert.

Australia has faced many challenges in the past year, a global pandemic, droughts, bushfires and floods. We have also faced in global affairs challenges to comfortable assumptions, that the world we function in reflects values we hold dear. The shifting character of global politics and the fate of democratic institutions are producing challenges to old verities. As a nation in our economic and security capabilities we have achieved a level of maturity that means we can step up to leadership in supporting outcomes, opportunities and security for the region in which we live. We are, and have to be, harder than we were.

And we know that. Compared to how we saw the world when I was young, we have come to comprehend that though wisdom dictates we seek powerful friends, above all, survival and prosperity relies on our own judgement and capabilities.

Now is a time for us all to come together to reflect, respect and celebrate the resilience of our nation and our people. We're all part of the story that is Australia. Today we celebrate also the extraordinary achievements of our WA Australian of the Year Award recipients who represent Western Australia as finalists in the Australian of the Year Awards.

Conclusion

Our finalists are here with us today - We wish them all the very best for the next stage of the Awards. We are extremely proud of them and their achievements, they inspire us, and we look forward to hearing the announcement of the National recipients later this week.

My congratulations to you all and my sincere thanks for the invaluable contributions you make to communities through Western Australia.