

City of South Perth

Australia Day Morning Ceremony

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC
Governor of Western Australia

Wednesday 26 January, 2022

***Check against delivery**

Kaya wanjoo!

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

How wonderful to have Joe Collard deliver today's Welcome to Country address, accompanied by the talented Birrdiya Dancers to begin this morning's ceremony – thank you for your great contribution to the morning.

As I stood here last year on this day, we reflected on a year like no other, full of hope that 2021 would be different than 2020. One year on, and our current health crisis continues to challenge us. We have shared trepidation of what future days will bring, and there is some uncertainty.

What **is certain** is the unity, strength and resilience of our community, and this is not just wishful thinking. This is the learned experience in watching our health, emergency services personnel and many more rise to meet these challenges. They have served this State with valour and we thank them for their service. As we look ahead to what the year will bring, we can count ourselves very fortunate to live in a place that has fared extraordinarily well in the pandemic – in this, we are the envy of the nation, and probably of the world.

Despite our good fortune, in the last year or so we have learned some really hard lessons, and experienced a tangible change in our strategic circumstance. Ever the 'lucky country', it has been easy to be Australians.

Our vast State possesses the world's greatest minerals with precisely what is needed for to develop new technologies. In the mining industry, many are being invested here. We can be proud of the same inventiveness in our agricultural community. But now is not the time for complacency. Now it's going to be tough. This crisis has taught us that serious mindedness is necessary, for our benefit and key to our survival.

In an increasingly dangerous world, we can appreciate the men and women who stand in the shoes of earlier generations prepared to defend this nation.

I thank each and every one of you who has worked to support our State's magnificent response to this ongoing crisis.

In recent days, these front line defenders have been given a reprieve. However, that is not a relax. It is not a situation we want. We need to be fully vaccinated. Above all, our kids need it. Delta was a threat to adults. Omicron is also, but particularly for kids, many of whom – after a mild first hit – a couple of months later experience a shut down. We need to play our part.

Today gives us an opportunity to **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 them. Together we inhabit the world's most ancient continent and share it with a civilisation over 60,000 years old.

Their languages are being taught, in more and more schools around the country. They always have been. In this State more than most. However, that approach is accelerating.

Aboriginal Australians are unique for their continuous connection to country dating back over 60,000 years. Most anthropologists will tell you oral memory goes back 7-to-800 years. Around the globe most societies have oral traditions.

Some recent research has established the stories, songlines and myths of our coastal Aboriginal population tracing back 7-13,000 years. 21 stories are reported from Aboriginal coastal communities. Geologically, they are dealing with areas gradually inundated as the last ice age ended. Examining the geological movements alongside the stories and deconstructed myths there is a clear correlation from all regions. They represent a 7-13,000 year old oral tradition at least.

Just as our national culture is enriched by Indigenous Australians, the social fabric of our communities is shaped by the diversity of the residents who chose to live **here**, above all other places. Of the almost 47,000 people living in the City of South Perth, I'm told that almost a third were born overseas or are from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Each of our new citizens bring enormous strength to our country and to Western Australia. I am so pleased to see you all today becoming Australian citizens, your contribution to our community is invaluable, made even moreso when we look at how COVID has and continues to impact the world in which we live.

In normal times, the Australian family grows by one per cent each year from migration. Sadly, that enriching flow of people has slowed almost completely in the last two years, which is to our detriment. Our population has, in fact, at times been going backwards, and that is **not** the road to survival or prosperity. The history buffs among us today will remember Arthur Calwell's cry that we must: 'populate or perish.'

Right now there are countless businesses here in WA with positions they can't fill. Our Universities are struggling without overseas students. We have got to start getting people back here as soon and safely as possible so that they do what all of you here

today have done – make a commitment and contribution to the nation. To our ***common wealth***.

Western Australia

Each of you join us today, not only as new Australian citizens, but also as residents of South Perth and its surrounding areas. As someone who has lived in South Perth until recently, I have very fond memories of this place and my time here.

On days like today we reflect on what it means to be Australian. We are known for many traits – generosity, resilience, and community spirit to name a few. We are also united in our love of storytelling – we all appreciate a good ***yarn***. The word yarn is a wonderful homonym meaning both a great story, and something that ties and binds things together. Our yarns serve those dual functions.

The theme for Australia Day 2022 is: “We’re all part of the story.”

As many of you know, I spent some time in the U.S. and one of their famous poets, Walt Whitman, when pondering the meaning of life, once reflected: “That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.” What lines will you write in the songbook of our land?

As your Governor, I formally recognise you as citizens of ***Western*** Australia. Upon choosing WA to live, may I congratulate you on your excellent taste. Our State is an Australian powerhouse. I am fortunate to advocate for this remarkable State and its achievements every day. This State is naturally blessed in every sense – home to manifold wealth in minerals, industry and the brightest minds.

Our remoteness has built our toughness and self-reliance and brought us together. We have forged a unique and thriving arts and culture scene, one that has been hit very hard by the pandemic.

If you can, I encourage you to support our artists, musicians and performers – it is not just the purview of Governors to be patrons of the arts. These are experiences we can all share.

Among our humble brags, Western Australians can rightly claim the best beaches in the country where on a hot Summer day like today you'll find (as well as the odd shark) the friendliest, most down-to-earth people you'll meet anywhere.

In my various roles I have travelled a lot, so I can assure you this is the case. Be proud that you can now call yourself one of us!

Conclusion

I formally welcome you all to Western Australia and Australia more broadly.

I particularly thank and congratulate recipients of awards presented in today's ceremony. You set a bright and inspiring example to our local communities.

Congratulations to you all. I wish you a safe and joyful Australia Day.