

Swearing-In Ceremony

Address by His Excellency Chris Dawson APM Governor of Western Australia

Friday, 15 July 2022

I acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the traditional owners of the Booja on which we gather. I pay my respects to their elders past and present, and I thank my good friend Emeritus Professor Colleen Hayward AM for her wonderful Welcome to Country.

Kaya Wanju and I further recognise and honour other Aboriginal elders and leaders from across Western Australia.

Having sworn by Almighty God my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Second, and further, to serve Her Majesty The Queen as the 34th Governor of the State of Western Australia, like all former 33 Governors, I am certain that I feel the same sense of humility in the honour of this appointment.

I thank the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for their welcoming words and to the Premier for nominating me to Her Majesty The Queen to take up this Office.

I am acutely conscious of the responsibilities and thank Chief Justice Peter Quinlan for his counsel and administration.

In the months leading up to this evening, together with my wife Darrilyn, I have received generous advice and counsel from former Governor Kim Beazley and Ms Susie Annus and thank them for their service to our State.

I have also received the benefit of the experience and wisdom from former Governors Kerry Sanderson, Malcolm McCusker and Ken Michael.

FAITH

I want to frame my address this evening around the importance of FAITH, HOPE and LOVE.

You will have noted a large Bible on which I swore my oath of allegiance and oath of office.

The importance of me swearing these oaths on this Bible is real for me.

Firstly, I believe in Almighty God and further, this is the 3rd occasion that I have sworn to serve Her Majesty The Queen.

In January 1978, I swore the oath of engagement as a police constable and one of my first shifts of DUTY was in fact a night shift to guard this very house for the protection of the then Governor Sir Wallace Kyle and Lady Kyle. By the way, nothing happened!

It never entered my mind that I would one day be privileged to take up residence as Governor.

The second time I swore to serve Her Majesty was upon my appointment in August 2017 as Commissioner of Police.

I take this opportunity to congratulate my successor Commissioner of Police Col Blanch APM. I wish him well on this his very first day of appointment and add my congratulations to his wife Mary in her important supporting role.

If I did not believe in the constitutional foundations upon which I swore these oaths then I would not be standing here.

Western Australians have enjoyed the stability of good governance, peace and prosperity under this form of government for nearly 200 years. While there have been some changes since 1829, our democratic system of government continues to serve us well.

Unless and until the people of Australia decide that the existing constitutional framework should change, we should continue to have faith in our present democratic form of governance.

The faith that I and Western Australians can have in our form of government must be protected and not subject to the latest trend but the subject of deep, careful and consultative consideration.

Simply put, it is better that we exercise great CARE in our journey ahead.

The poignancy and relevance of swearing these oaths on this particular Bible is that I am a Great Great Grandson of Elijah and Ann Dawson, the original owners of this Family Bible.

My great great grandparents accompanied our first Governor Captain James Stirling on a ship from the Swan River Colony in the company of new settlers including other well-known families such as the Bussells, Molloys and Turners in establishing the 3rd settlement at Augusta in 1830.

Elijah and Ann Dawson met the Wardandi people of the Noongar nation in those first encounters.

I thank and respect the senior Wardandi people present here this evening including Mr Dennis Eggington AM and Aunty Trish Wall – and I thank them and other Aboriginal people for their continuing guidance and assistance to me.

The fact that Elijah Dawson was the first policeman who met with the Wardandi people brings poignancy and union to this evening's ceremony.

HOPE

This brings me to speak of the hope for our future as Western Australians.

We have much to be thankful for the sacrifices and challenges that have been met by our forebears:

Our FALLEN men and women of this State who made the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of our country and our communities and way of life;

Our DEFENCE FORCES;

Our FIRST RESPONDERS be they from the EMERGENCY services, the FIRE, AMBULANCE, HEALTH and POLICE;

Our JUDICIARY, COURTS AND PUBLIC SERVICE;

Our strength in VOLUNTEERS across the State whether in cities, towns, regional and remote communities.

We have such rich resources, both natural and human, that our HOPE for the future is well founded.

LOVE

Let me now turn to the importance of love.

I am passionate about Western Australia and its people, and I relish the opportunity to further support and advocate for all who share this passion, indeed, LOVE for our State and it's people.

As I foreshadowed in my comments when the Premier announced my impending appointment, I am delighted that my wife Darrilyn, who I dearly love, will be able to strengthen my DUTY and role as Governor in sharing the opportunities to the important advocacy and support of a broad range of organisations and communities.

We are very proud parents of our daughter Marena and her husband Steve, our son Royce and his wife Kathleen who join with us here with our beautiful grandchildren, Ava, Judah, Margot, Archie and Florence.

Darrilyn and I wish to record our love and gratitude to our parents Fred and Margaret Dawson and Norman and Glenda Crane for the values and the heritage they instilled in our lives.

Together with our extended family, our siblings and their spouses, including those who are living overseas but watching on the livestream, our lifelong friends, colleagues and workmates, we are delighted you have joined with us here this evening.

And so FAITH, HOPE and LOVE are powerful in shaping why and how we all, as people of Western Australia, can continue to live our lives, in the freedom and beauty we enjoy.

I undertake to uphold these oaths and not be captured by tradition but be a respectful custodian and use the opportunity to advocate, support and encourage the young leaders of today, to further the reconciliation between our First Nation people and all West Australians.

I will be among the voices to celebrate Western Australia and to recognise those amongst us who give of themselves in the service of others at personal sacrifice, often voluntarily and who enrich our lives through their individual and collective achievements. Whether that be through public service, industry, arts, sport or through endeavours in science and innovation, we have much for which to be thankful.

I thank Australia's Federation Guard, WA Police Pipe Band and the Australia Army Band Perth. I also thank the staff of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Public Sector Commissioner and Government House staff.

In closing, when I witnessed Governor Beazley reading out a message from Her Majesty the Queen in her recent jubilee celebration, there were two words that stood out to me.

And that was that Her Majesty The Queen closed her message with these two words, YOUR SERVANT.

That is truly a great example of grace and humility that I will strive to carry out in this great duty and responsibility as the 34th Governor of Western Australia.