

BURNIE CITY COUNCIL — AUSTRALIA DAY 2022
ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BURNIE ARTS AND FUNCTION CENTRE
WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY 2022

Good morning everyone. I welcome you to the Burnie City Council Australia Day 2022 celebration.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

It is a pleasure to be here with you all today. It is a privilege to be invited to deliver the Australia Day Address. I am especially pleased that the Burnie City Council worked to prepare a plan allowing so many of us to come together, despite the continuing challenges the Covid pandemic has thrown our way recently.

I acknowledge:

- Mayor Steve Kons and Burnie City Councillors
- The Honourable Ruth Forrest
- Ms Anita Dow
- Mr Felix Ellis
- Recipients of Australia Day awards; and
- New Australian citizens who will make their oaths or affirmations today.

The Australia Day organisation theme for today is 'Reflect, Respect, Celebrate'¹. This captures the aim of the day, to reflect on what the day means, and to acknowledge as a community respect for each other, as well as to celebrate.

¹ <https://www.australiaday.org.au/plan-your-event/planning/> accessed 12 Jan 22

Australia Day has multiple meanings; for some it is Survival Day, marking the endurance of ongoing cultures and traditions.

It is important that these views are respected, and that collectively we have constructive conversations about our history. This can inform ways in which we can move forward as a united community. We aspire to Australia Day evolving into a truly inclusive celebration.

Many say that being Australian is marked by a connection to country. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, of more than 60,000 years of continuous living and culture, have this deep connection. And strong connectivity may be felt by others, albeit in different ways. Our new citizens, with us today, now have a connection to Australia, a land and society that welcomes them as new immigrants. Australia provides the pathway to participation at all levels by offering citizenship with all of the rights and obligations that entails.

Australia Day is a day to get together with family and friends, to enjoy the summer weather, and to celebrate being Australian.

Some may say that being Australian is marked by a sense of mateship and commitment to others. This may be indicated by the bonds forged in times of conflict and natural disasters. These are often linked to the national commitments of armed forces, particularly centred on ANZAC legends; of larrikin soldiers, healthily sceptical of authority; and of mateship.

Others may point to the success of our multicultural society and the degree to which many people from diverse backgrounds have been able to come together to share in our democratic system of government, while retaining proudly identifiable cultures, religions, customs, traditions and languages.

Others may point to our love of sport and our sporting successes. The recent Ashes series and the current Tennis Open are visible examples. Sport plays an important role in our communities, fostering physical and mental benefits and providing a much-needed focus for community spirit. Local football and cricket clubs are often rallying points for our communities, particularly in times of strife or difficulty.

Currently, our medical, health care and front-line personnel are at the forefront of our Covid pandemic response. They have the values and ideals of service and

sacrifice. We thank these thousands of healthcare workers for their efforts to support us and keep us safe.

There are many other examples of what may make us, collectively and individually, Australians: our charities and philanthropy, our education system, our beach culture, our outback, our health care system, our humour, our mateship. We are each a synthesis of these elements that define an Aussie, the essence of which we celebrate today.

Of importance is the recognition of our fellow Australians for the vast amount of service and sacrifice they give to our communities. Yesterday in Wynyard, we invested with the insignia of their awards, three outstanding members of the northwest community for work in sport, service to our veteran community, support to local community groups and the military. In our Australia Day Honours List released today, 29 Tasmanians have been announced for appointment to our Order of Australia for awards for meritorious or conspicuous service in support of our national, state and local communities.

Our Honours system is entirely nomination based. No political or other pressure is considered when the Honours Secretariat makes a decision regarding awards. However, without nominations, the Secretariat is constrained in its ability to redress some of the inequities of the system. We note that honours do not fully represent the diversity in our communities. Women, Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people are less nominated, so are more underrepresented. The breadth of Australian society should be reflected in the outcomes of the Order of Australia. With this in mind, I encourage everyone here to consider nominating someone in your community whose dedication, service and commitment to the community is worthy of recognition.

Today there are a number of local citizens being recognised with awards for citizen, senior citizen and community event of the year. These awards do not seek to place individuals above others. Rather, they recognise the significant and often unknown work of exceptional people within their local community. I congratulate each of these recipients who will receive their award later today.

There are also some 24 people here who will soon become Australian citizens. They have come from around the world, including Egypt, the Netherlands and Taiwan. The award of citizenship is one of the most significant ways in which Australia extends a welcome to new arrivals.

All these new citizens have made their decision to settle in Australia – and in the beautiful northwest of Tasmania – and to take the additional step of accepting the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. You now have duties and rights to participate in our democratic system of government, by voting, by exercising your right to free speech or by standing for political office. You can help shape the future of our nation.

On Australia Day we celebrate what is best in our society while acknowledging that we have much work to do in many areas. Our relationship with our Indigenous population, the care of our elderly and our disabled, global warming and environmental degradation, homelessness, family and sexual violence, and social, economic and gender inequity are some of many areas that require our attention. By working together in a spirit of respect, understanding, and cooperation, we can use our best endeavours to address these challenges. We should strive to hand to our children and grandchildren a better Australia – one that recognises our past while committed to a better and fairer future for our nation.

I encourage everyone to enjoy the day, to draw together and to support each other.

Thank you.