

Kaya Wongu

Hello and welcome to the season of Makuru which symbolises rain and cold weather.

Welcome to the start of the City of Cockburn NAIDOC week events and in particular today's Flag Raising ceremony.

Thank you Professor Len Collard for a wonderful Welcome to Country providing us all with a deeper meaning of the Nyungar heritage, culture and language that reflects the dreamtime stories going back tens of thousands of years.

I acknowledge the Whadjup people of the Nyungar nation who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land on which we have gathered today and I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging and I acknowledge all First Nations people who are here with us today.

I acknowledge:

- Councillor Phoebe Corke;
- Mr Anton Lees, A/Chief Executive Officer;
- Other members of the Executive and members of staff;
- Professor Len Collard, Nyungar Elder and Lisa;
- Nyungar and Torres Strait Islander Elders and other First Nation People here today;
- Members of our community;
- Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys; one and all.

It is an honour to stand before you today as we gather to celebrate NAIDOC week 2023 with this Flag Raising ceremony event.

This year, we embrace the powerful theme of "For Our Elders," recognizing and paying tribute to the remarkable wisdom, resilience, and rich cultural heritage of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.

NAIDOC Week holds deep significance for our community as we come together to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by First Nations people in shaping the past, present, and future of this land.

It is a time to reflect upon the enduring connections to Country, the profound teachings, and the stories handed down through generations.

Throughout this week, we will have the opportunity to learn from our Elders, listen to their stories and better understand their cultural traditions.

There are many events on throughout the city during the week and we hope to see as much of the community involved as possible.

The City of Cockburn remains committed to fostering an inclusive community that celebrates diversity and nurtures cultural understanding.

We understand that the path to reconciliation begins with recognising and honouring the voices and contributions of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Elders.

Their experiences are a living testament to the resilience of First Nations people and this is deserving of great recognition and respect.

As we celebrate NAIDOC Week, let us come together and acknowledge the immense wisdom of our Elders.

Let us honour their lived experiences and acknowledge that the journey towards reconciliation is ongoing.

This week can serve as a catalyst for change, an opportunity to deepen our understanding and an invitation to actively listen to the voices and stories of Elders.

Together let us commit to a future where their voices are amplified, and cultural practices are preserved.

Thank you, may this NAIDOC week be a time of unity, celebration, and a profound gratitude for our elders.