

Australia Day Address, 2020  
Broome, Western Australia

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**The languages of Our History**

***Yawuru***

Pronunciation

*(English)*

***Mabu ngurragarriny,***

Mah-boo nooda-garding

*(Good morning,)*

***Nganalanggan nyamba buru jirra Yawurungany ngarrungunil.***

Nah-nah-lung-garn narm-bah boo-roo jiddah Yawuru-

nun nardu-noo-nil.

*(I wish to pay my respects to the Yawuru elders, past, present and emerging, for their custodianship of these lands.)*

***Nganyjun gala mabu nyangajunu jaliny yingarranyanjanu yirr nganagaju Yawurungany ngan- ga miliyagun.***

Nun-joon gah-lah mah-boo nyah-nah-joo-noo inger- dan-yarn-jar-noo aired nah-nah-ga-joo Yawuru-nun nardu-noo-nil milly-yah-goon

*(I thank them for their welcome here to Broome and their support in helping me learn some Yawuru to speak to you today.)*

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***Noongar***

*(English)*

***Kaya wandjoo wandjoo.***

*(Hello and welcome.)*

***Karlup noongar boodja***

*(My home is on Noongar country.)*

Australians are not a subtle people. We are bold, iconic and can be spotted a mile away - and not always for the best reasons, but we can set them aside for today.

Celebrating Australia is awkward for many of us. It can have an air of the tall poppy syndrome about it.

We are proud of our country, but we aren't as, let's say, boisterous as the Americans on 4 July or the British at a Royal Wedding.

But we have many reasons to be proud of who we are, and this can be enriched by looking through our history.

Today many of us are thinking of our friends across this state and over east ravaged by fires. The coming together of our communities to support them has been inspiring as well as infectious. I am not great at running events, but even I was able to run a fundraising BBQ in my community.

In one of the great ironies of our country, earlier this week it hailed in Canberra. Some of you might say it was to knock some sense into our politicians, but I couldn't possibly comment.

I think this contrast is part of the Australian story.

We have fire across large swathes of the country, but ice in others.

We are the smallest continent but the largest island.

We have a small population but keep beating larger countries at the Olympics and winning international awards.

We can see this contrast in our history too. Most Australians only speak English, where the history of our land is spoken in over 300 different traditional languages and dialects developed over the past 60,000 years.

I went to Bali for the first time last year. I may have been the last person to visit Western Australia's favourite northern suburb.

Quickly I realised that if I was going to buy anything or get anywhere I was going to have to pick up some Bahasa Indonesian. A friend of mine gave me a list of phrases in advance she uses to get around. A practical mix of "hello", "please", "how much?" "too high" and "another cocktail".

Most Indonesians had a grasp of English, but the more Bahasa I spoke the more I got done.

It's the same when people visit Australia, we expect them to understand the basics of English or at least try.

Yet most of us have only heard the story of our country told in English, and usually that story is only about the last couple of hundred years.

Hearing the story of our land in traditional languages will open us up to the breadth and depth of who we are.

It is right that Australians learn the traditional languages of the country they are living on. If we are to understand our country we should do that by hearing the words it is told in, it is always better than a translation.

Learning Indigenous languages is an opportunity to see our country in 3D.

That is why I have been learning Noongar, as I said this is the traditional language of the land where I live.

I think Australia is the greatest country in the world. Yet most of us have only heard the story of our country told in English, and usually that story is only about the last couple of hundred years. To know what Australia is we must all seek to understand more of the 60,000 years before white settlement.

Captain Stirling settled what is now Perth not even 200 years ago, and Broome was settled by white Australia about 140 years ago. 200 years is less than 0.33 per cent of 60,000 years. If I want to understand a topic I read more than one-third of one per cent of a book; I listen to more than one-third of one per cent of the conversations I have, even when I feel like that might be enough; and, I have my eyes open more than one-third of one per cent to see where I am going.

Traditional languages can tell us where we have been.

Some of you may think this is going to be a bit hard. My mother struggles to say the word anaesthetic and is still overwhelmed by some of the Greek names in my father's family. It is fair to say that Indigenous languages won't always be easy for her to learn.

Learning Indigenous languages is part of the journey of reconciliation. Reconciliation is more than saying sorry or learning about the less than stellar parts of our history. Reconciliation is an opportunity to learn from each other and share in the richness of everything our country has and to see the rich tapestry of who we really are.

I grew up listening to Yothu Yindi who inspired us and had us dancing to *Treaty*. Today, I listen to Baker Boy intertwine English and Yolŋu Matha words into the sickest beats going around.

When we hear Indigenous languages spoken non-Indigenous people like myself are curious. We want to know more, and we want to get on board.

And this is where the great Australian spirit can thrive - we can do this on a bedrock of mateship.

We turn to our mates when we need a hand, and we like rising to the challenge when asked.

It's the same with learning Indigenous languages. We can turn to our Indigenous mates and ask for their help in learning traditional languages, both literally and figuratively it will start a new dialogue.

It's mateship that helps us put out fires, that helps us raise our kids and that helps us build our community and our country.

It is an act of mateship to both learn and teach Indigenous languages. And it is from there that we can see our beautiful country in full colour.

It is mateship that has made our country great and it is mateship that makes us the envy of the world.

And if you don't quite get Yawuru or other traditional languages right, as I have this week, the person teaching will probably say *marlu buji* - no worries.

And that is the truest act of mateship there is.

### ***Yawuru***

Pronunciation

*(English)*

***Gala mabu guligarran ngayu miliyagun. Wumbul mabu ngangan gurryirr.***

Gah-lah mah-boo goo-lee-gah-dun nah-yoo milly-yh-

goon. Oom-bull mah-boo nah-nun good-aired.

*(Thank you for listening to me today. I wish you well.)*

***Warrjingany mabujunu rumarra.***

Ward-jee-nun mah-boo-joo-noo roo-mah-dah.

*(Have a great day.)*

Thank you for listening to me today. I wish you well.

Have a great day, we can always find a reason to celebrate Australia.