



MAYORAL MEMO - 25 JANUARY 2023

If I walked the streets of Dubbo Regional Council and asked people if they wanted to see the region progress, I assume the majority of responses would be in the affirmative. The alternative seems less attractive. Stagnation or regression. I wonder what the response would be though if I walked the same path but asked people if they wanted to see change. Some people are quite comfortable with their current circumstances. The Diffusion of Innovations theory suggests that 16 per cent of the population resists change and prefer their traditions and an additional 34 per cent only make change when they feel that the majority of society has already changed.

Here is the problem. Progress is impossible without change.

For our two Australia Day events this week, we are making subtle changes that will result in real progress in our society.

The first change is to hold the Australia Day event in Wellington as a twilight event on 25 January. Although I have received some correspondence to suggest that this is less than ideal, it would be worth

taking some time to consider the history of Australia Day and events associated with the day.

Since 2004, the announcement and presentation of the annual Australian of the Year awards has taken place in Canberra on the evening of 25 January. The Australian of the Year award only started in 1960 and was then taken over by the National Australia Day Council in 1979. When I was growing up, I remember the public holiday for Australia Day was the closest Monday to the date so the ceremonies might have been held several days before or after the 26th. It was only in 1994 that 26 January was declared a national public holiday and events have been held on that day since.

Over the 235 years since Captain Arthur Phillip arrived at Sydney Cove, various dates and events have been used by different states to celebrate the nation.

By making the first subtle change to a twilight event in Wellington, we believe that we can deliver a better event and create an environment that encourages united participation across our entire local government area. It is important to acknowledge our past and where we have come from but also to focus on our future and remember what a wonderful nation we have. With the ceremonies in both Dubbo and Wellington, we have also added an address by an Aboriginal Elder and we have created a market event around the ceremony with a particular focus on multicultural food. With 18.5 per cent of our population born overseas and 16.6 per cent identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, what a wonderful opportunity to see the diverse melting pot we have in our community.

I look forward to seeing large crowds at both Australia Day events.

Councillor Mathew Dickerson
Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council

Last Edited: 24 Jan 2023