



# MAYORAL MEMO - 7 DECEMBER 2022

“One of my election policies is unity. So I am trying to bring the community together. And if you want to say it, you got to do it. So I’m here to represent the Aboriginal community today and I thank you all for letting me come down to welcome you,” said Councillor Lewis Burns at the Australia Day ceremony this year.

Dubbo Regional Council is in an enviable position of having two Aboriginal Councillors in Lewis and Councillor Pam Wells and, together with all Councillors, we believe that through our actions and decisions, we can bring our entire community together.

The next step along that journey will be at the Council meeting this week when Councillors will consider a report to make some subtle – but significant – changes to Australia Day for 2023. These are proposed trial changes with Councillors yet to vote on these. There are two variations being proposed for a trial in 2023.

The first change is to add an additional address to the ceremony. This address will be by an Aboriginal Elder so the community can hear about

Australia Day through a different lens. We will, of course, still have a Welcome to Country as we have had previously but this address will place an Aboriginal speaker on the same platform as the Ambassador and the Mayor who will also deliver an address as they have in the past.

With 16.6 per cent of our population being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, our LGA is in a perfect position to be a leader across the nation. We also have 18.5 per cent of our population who were born overseas so our multicultural community should also be reflected so we are also proposing to replace our after-ceremony entertainment with multicultural food stalls and a market.

The second change is to make the event a twilight event the night before Australia Day therefore leaving the entire public holiday to enjoy at your own leisure. It is at this point that we ran in to a brick wall with the Australian Government. After several e-mails and phone calls between both myself and our staff with the Department of Home Affairs, we were told - categorically - that the Australian Citizenship Code states that local government councils must hold a citizenship ceremony on 26 January as part of their Australia Day celebrations provided that location confers citizenship on more than 20 people throughout the year.

So the twilight event for Dubbo was out due to the number of new citizens Dubbo welcomes each year but Wellington has the opportunity to lead the nation. After a discussion at the most recent meeting, the majority of the Wellington Town Committee is in favour of a trial twilight event in 2023.

As always, never hesitate to tell me your thoughts at [mayor@dubbo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mayor@dubbo.nsw.gov.au)

**Councillor Mathew Dickerson**  
**Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council**

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