

KPMG

21st Annual Best of the West Dinner

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC Governor of Western Australia

Thursday, 25th October 2018

Thank you for your warm welcome.

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land – the Wadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past and present. For thousands of years Wadjuk Noongar people have been visiting Mooro Katta or Kaarta Gar-Up, two of their names for Mount Eliza, the highest point of Kings Park where we are this evening.

I am delighted to be here for KPMG’s Annual “Best of the West Dinner” which showcases the wonderful attributes of our State, including food and wine. And where better than at the iconic award winning Fraser’s Restaurant in our spectacular Kings Park?

I would like to thank KPMG for organising the event each year and congratulate it on this special anniversary year – its 21st. That’s a significant milestone in the great effort to promote the best of WA.

I’ve been asked to speak to you tonight to share my perceptions and aspirations in my role as Governor of Western Australia, including my thoughts about what legacy I would like to leave from this time.

To begin, I must say that it is an enormous privilege to be able to serve the people of WA in this role. It wasn’t something that my wife, Susie, nor I had planned after we returned from the United States when my term finished as Australian Ambassador in 2016. However, when the Premier approached me to say he wished to recommend me for the position, I felt in every sense there was an opportunity not to be missed. I could continue to contribute to my home State in a way that I hoped would encourage and lift the prospects of people’s lives and futures here.

I said when I was leaving my Ambassadorship that when you come to the stage in life that I’ve reached, to still be able to do something of value psychologically is precious.

I have a deep affection for Western Australia. I have been very fortunate to have grown up here with all the promise and contributions it gave me over the course of my life. So, it seemed an opportune and right thing to do. What was interesting to me was that on my acceptance, I found myself rather daunted, even a little overwhelmed, by the prospect. I said this to the media at the time, which is I suppose an odd thing to say for someone who has been in public life for as long as I have

I have now spent nearly six months as the 33rd Governor of WA. As I have said publically, I have found it at least as heavy as any of the challenges I have faced to this point on the meandering roads of my public life.

I have a profound respect for democracy at work. This means I will always act to sustain the confidence of our people in the democratic process. As I said at my swearing-in ceremony, democracy is under challenge globally so we must all be proud advocates for the popular will, both at home and globally.

I am thoroughly looking forward to the journey ahead. I hope to map a course that contributes to the brilliant innovations and contributions being made by our State's wonderful people. I am determined to use my time to promote and open doors wherever I can that will advance and cultivate opportunities for them and their ideas.

We are a very different State to that of my childhood, and I dare say that goes for many of yours too. I said at a Master Builders WA lunch recently that we have had many challenges but we have risen to prosperity, this city having quadrupled in size since the times of my teens. We now find ourselves in the midst of a new challenge – what has been described as the new global renaissance of creativity and design, or the fourth industrial revolution.

You will be aware of the impact this revolution's technological change is having in your own fields of business. Some class this change as "disruption" but I am more with those who classify it in terms of offering new modes of innovation – new energy, information and automation systems – the new tools made by the people for the people.

So, it is an exciting time to be back in WA and, as I said, I am very grateful that the Premier suggested to me that I should perform this advocacy role for the State's capabilities. This is something I would like to touch on a little further with you.

As Governor, there are the constitutional and ceremonial duties that must be undertaken, and of course, a focus and commitment to the ever expanding community program to ensure the interests of our citizens are central. Important advocacy or "promotion" on behalf of the State is the other vital role of being an effective contemporary Governor.

Advocating for WA's interests, both interstate and overseas, is what I will be giving special attention to during my term.

To go back briefly, the constitutional part of my role includes presiding over Executive Council meetings and signing Treasury authorities for the appropriation of funds to run the State.

The ceremonial arm involves representing the people at important State, national and international occasions including Anzac Day, investiture ceremonies to present Australian honours to worthy citizens, and the opening of State Parliament. It is important that those who contribute to our society are well supported and recognised by official processes, and I have enjoyed these events thoroughly.

I am also pleased to tell you that I have now confirmed patronage of more than 70 local and State community organisations. This is part of the community role of Governor, and one which I value highly.

I am looking forward to working closely with these organisations and championing their endeavours.

Additionally, I have begun the first of my official regional visits as Governor. Part of my role will be to develop a good working knowledge of the State, and engaging with the people that make up the fabric of our rural and regional communities.

This brings me back to advocacy. My first regional trip was in August to the magnificent East Kimberley, where I visited Kununurra, Wyndham, Warmun and Halls Creek. I was struck by the great diversity of Aboriginal culture and art in the region. It made me very proud and determined also to put the interests of

Indigenous West Australians high in my advocacy efforts. I will share a brief story that I think highlights one of the many ways forward.

One of the Aboriginal art galleries I visited was the Warmun Art Centre. As might be expected in a remote community, economic opportunities can be limited, so it was great to hear that a cruise ship docking in Wyndham had some passengers make an excursion there and while only brief, they purchased \$100,000 worth of art. I believe this is indicative of the unrealised potential for Aboriginal culture to entice visitors to our great State.

We have all the credentials for being the national centre for Aboriginal art. I spoke about this at a recent WA Tourism conference to advance the idea that it would be wonderful to see us use that opportunity and have the various Aboriginal nations of our State come together in support of this with a central gallery of works. The world would love to see it.

The first Australians proved to be the most resilient of all people on Earth when they survived the ice age. They demonstrated survival skills and art and ancient cultural practices that today fascinate people from all over, and they are prepared to showcase them.

Indigenous West Australians therefore must be central to our refreshed tourism industry, and towards this I am pleased that the World Indigenous Tourism Summit will be hosted here in 2020, thanks to a successful bid by WAITOC.

Another area I see great opportunity to grow our tourism potential is through international study. Students not only learn at our universities and other institutions, but they offer tremendous tourism opportunities when they come to Perth. They spend many thousands of dollars along with their families who come to visit. It is good to hear of new plans to incentivise high achieving students with pathways to skilled migration and improve graduate employability prospects as a whole.

Our international student numbers are not as high as we would like in comparison to the rest of the country. And this is a great example of where I think Government House can play a big role. We are working on ways to involve ourselves in their welcome and we are currently liaising with StudyPerth to make this happen. We want to see Government House used to advance State strategies and this is one area where I think opportunities abound.

I was pleased to see that new tourism figures released by Tourism WA for the year ending June 2018, show that WA hosted nearly 1.48 million interstate visitors in the last financial year, up 11.3 per cent on the previous year and the biggest growth rate in four years. They spent \$1.52 billion, an increase of 4.7 per cent. Events, particularly football, at the Optus Stadium have been credited with being a major factor.

It is good news and a positive sign but we need to do more to keep people overnight. While we had more tourists, less stayed with figures showing a 14.1 per cent drop (to 10.4 million) in visitor nights.

We have significant projects, infrastructure and new governance and strategy underway, all of which are set against a backdrop of our world-class natural environment. The potential is there and waiting.

When it comes to our standard of living here, I find it hard to think of another genuine contender. We produce the highest quality of foods and wine and our shores boast a spectacular network of beaches and expansive marine and terrestrial parks waiting to be explored. Not to forget what the wild and rugged interior has to offer those seeking adventure.

Then there is the economic and creative genius. As a State we have much to offer. You understand this very well. We make a major contribution to this nation and each of you help lead that drive with incredibly important input and involvement.

We are a clever people with major achievements in medicine, energy related technologies, biosciences, radio astronomy. We lead globally in minerals and energy and software for the world's mining industry. We have great capability in the new space age development where we see ourselves becoming a super hub to the new Australian Space Agency. (Many see WA as the perfect place to host the agency but there seems a view that Canberra, where it has just opened, may be its final home.)

A super space hub would certainly be a great fit here owing in part to our fantastic geography, and proud history of space investment and support. You might be surprised to learn that there are already 74 international and Australian companies with a presence in WA operating in space and space-related services.

I am determined to advocate our State's unique position where we have, or are developing, critical global space infrastructure such as the recent important development of the Murchison radio-astronomy Observatory which was established by the CSIRO in 2009. Today, this 12,600 hectare site is home to the Square Kilometre Array project, the world's largest radio telescope. It is co-located in South Africa and will see a collection of hundreds of thousands of ground radio antennas able to survey galaxies, allowing us to research the earliest phases of the universe.

Our universities are offering world-class expertise in this area too. You will have heard of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research (ICRAR), a joint venture by Curtin University and the University of Western Australia. I was pleased to hear that the Curtin University node of the Centre was involved in research (released earlier this month) which detected, in the sky above the CSIRO's Australia Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) radio telescope at the Murchison radio-astronomy Observatory, the closest and brightest fast radio bursts ever detected – these new findings nearly doubling the known number of these powerful flashes of radio waves from deep space. So both our world-class equipment and expertise is helping to lead the globe in the study of the early Universe.

As well as space capabilities, we have our world-class defence industries – generating substantial business for our economy, demonstrating our ingenuity, and serving our national interest. This interest is amplified now by the geopolitics determined by our place adjoining the Indian Ocean – a level of increasing strategic interest and importance perhaps not seen since World War Two.

WA once hosted the biggest United States submarine fleet outside of Hawaii. Nowadays our strategic significance is centered largely on our critical minerals and new trade routes which are integral to the international economy and world prosperity. For example, the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson is a critical asset, both to the State and the nation. It hosts several of the world's most respected defence sustainment companies, not to mention world-class fabrication and construction capabilities also at Henderson.

We are also home to a range of innovative small to medium enterprises producing defence technology ranging from communications equipment for special-forces soldiers to truly remarkable ship stabilisation kits.

We are doing incredible things across the broad range of industry and commerce, so well represented by yourselves. Our recent prosperity has been driven by yours and others' entrepreneurial and business efforts as leaders, and it is inspiring.

As I said at the start, we are a very different State to that of my childhood. I remember before I took up my five years as Australia's Ambassador to the US, being given statistics that pointed to a nine to one balance against us on the domestic account front - so heavy that trains went back East in ballast.

And so much so that steel fabrication done in my electorate was constructing the uranium mines at Roxby Downs in South Australia. But on our external account our mining, energy and agricultural exports showed a nine to one balance in our favour. WA companies were three times as likely to be engaged in economic activity in Asia as their eastern counterparts.

Our exports have been fundamental to the nation's export performance. Today we have another bright future on the horizon with the battery mineral industry and rare earth minerals. The lithium story is increasingly well known, the rare earth story less so.

In Japan, these minerals are known as the "vitamins of technology". They are critical in virtually every fourth industrial revolution product from mobile phones to ICBMs. I was told the other day they are present in more than 3000 US weapons systems, and of course they are even more vital in civilian production, for instance in the burgeoning electric vehicle and green energy industries.

In light of such considerations, President Trump and former Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, announced back in February that our nations would work together on "*strategic minerals exploration, extraction, processing and research, and development of rare earths and high performance metals to sustain the jobs of today and develop the jobs of tomorrow*". (23 February 2018).

It is hard to see any country having a modern manufacturing base without access to rare earths, and we in WA can help here.

There is a pressing need for us to creatively harness these new market opportunities for our future prosperity.

It is why we need enthusiastic advocates for our many and developing capabilities. It is where I will be focusing my energies. It is a daunting but critical challenge – and one I am proud to have the good fortune to perform.

It is something also that I hope I can look to you all for support, encouragement and ideas. I am anticipating a productive and happy collaboration with you during my time as Governor. We are in this together. Our growth and happiness depends on it.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak to you and please enjoy the rest of this wonderful evening celebrating our great State together.