

SORRY DAY — GERALDTON FUNCTION

Statement

The PRESIDENT: Are there any members' statements?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Oh, yeah, can we have some?

The PRESIDENT: I give the call to Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm. We will give Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich a chance to catch her breath.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It's all right; I don't need it!

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (Agricultural) [9.45 pm]: It would be a rarity that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich would need to catch her breath, Mr President; nonetheless, I will take your call.

I will make a statement about a Sorry Day function that Hon Max Trenorden and I attended in Geraldton on Sunday, 13 February. In excess of 100 people gathered on the Geraldton foreshore for the third anniversary of a most significant day of remembrance. Kevin Rudd's 2008 speech to federal Parliament and the people of Australia was certainly not before time. It reflected a contemporary view in our country that the treatment of Indigenous people since European settlement in the late eighteenth century has resulted in much hurt, anger and loss of family and identity. I also suggest that Kevin Rudd's statement meant much, particularly to Indigenous Australians. It gave the message that the wrongs of the past are acknowledged and that, as a country, we can now make some sort of meaningful progress.

It is important that I acknowledge the presence at that gathering of a number of very special people in Geraldton. Firstly, I mention a lady by the name of Lucina Cross, who is a highly respected Aboriginal educator. I will shortly read the speech that Lucina delivered on Sorry Day, especially noting her challenge to the local community to work together to ensure future reconciliation and achievement. Also in attendance was Leeza Radcliffe from the Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation, which is also referred to as Streeties; Shane Hill, the former member for Geraldton and now chief executive officer of Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation, who coordinated the program events on the day; and Eric Dalgety, who provided the entertainment and was ably assisted by Radio Mama. There were also mums, dads and kids from the local community as well as board members from Bundiyarra. All in all, an enjoyable and very meaningful day was had by those who attended.

Hon Max Trenorden: Including by Hon Max Trenorden.

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Certainly. I will now read Lucina Cross's statement. It is something that she can be proud of. It needs to be put on the public record, which I will do right now. It is simply entitled "Sorry!", and reads —

This day means many things to many people, but overall it is a day of remembrance.

Today I remember that growing up I didn't understand or appreciate what my mother went through as a young child losing all that she loved.

I didn't understand for many years and when I did, I was hurt for her, I was angry at what had been done to her and our families.

I knew then that I had a choice. I could be angry forever and live a negative life.

Or, remembering an old saying that my Grandmother used to say — "every cloud has a silver lining".

I looked for ways to manage this anger and hurt.

The only way I could do this was to believe that there was some higher purpose and meaning and this path for her was meant to be.

Because if our mother and grandmother hadn't been taken we wouldn't be standing here.

So in order to make some sense and give value and hope for her hurt, anger and loss we had to make our lives positive and purposeful.

It is our duty to live lives that have meaning, and honours her memory.

We can't take away all the hurt and loss she and our Martu families suffered, but we can try hard to do positive things that add value to her life every day.

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We remember and appreciate that Kevin Rudd was courageous enough to make an attempt to ease our hurt and anger and say, "WE ARE SORRY!"

We remember that it doesn't take away all the hurt and loss but it does acknowledge all those people who lost so much.

Today we remember those many, many young children who were taken from their families and their countries.

We are sorry for the bad times they experienced.

We are sorry for all the things their mothers, fathers and families missed out on sharing with them.

We are sorry that these young people missed out on growing up with their families and with their countries.

We are sorry that they missed out on and, in many instances, lost the opportunities to grow within, learn and share their languages and cultures.

We are sorry that many of these young people have been lost to their families and countries forever, but hope they have found safety, peace and love wherever they are now.

But today we make a promise to them and their families that we will live lives that make positive differences in our communities.

We will love and nurture our children and give them every opportunity to achieve their life goals and live successful lives.

We will make sure they learn about their language and culture and have the knowledge and skills to teach their children.

We will work hard to make sure our communities learn to live together with respect and harmony.

We will all work hard to honour their memories and hardship by being a caring, positive and successful community that work together to ensure our future is one of reconciliation and achievement.

WE OWE THEM THE BEST WE CAN BE AND DO!!!!

On that note, I will leave the statement. I think that is a marvellous piece of writing from a very well educated person and a person whose heart and soul is in the development of her own people in her local community.