

ACTS AMENDMENT (WESTERN AUSTRALIA DAY) BILL 2008

Second Reading

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to rename Foundation Day, which is observed on 1 June each year, as Western Australia Day and in so doing amend the Public and Bank Holidays Act 1972 and the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993.

The first European settlers, under the command of Captain James Stirling, RN, Lieutenant Governor, arrived from Britain to settle the Swan River Colony on 1 June 1829. Foundation Day is an important day for all Western Australians and is celebrated with a public holiday on the first Monday in June. Now, almost 180 years after European settlement, it is in my view appropriate for Foundation Day to become known as Western Australia Day.

The story of Western Australia's European settlement began in 1826 when the British, under the command of Major Edmund Lockyer, established an army outpost at King George Sound on the south coast. Before that Western Australia had been reached by the Dutch, French, Portuguese and British, but explorers at the time found the land too harsh and left it to the Indigenous people. In 1827 James Stirling led explorations of the Swan River and reported back to Britain of favourable conditions, recommending that a colony be established in the area. Britain agreed and began sending ships carrying the first settlers. The military, aboard HMS *Challenger*, arrived ahead of Captain Stirling's civilian vessel *Parmelia*. Later, HMS *Sulphur* arrived with a contingent of an army garrison.

The colonists first sighted the Western Australian coastline on 1 June 1829, a harsh winter's day; they were unable to set foot on the land. Despite this setback, 1 June has always been regarded as Foundation Day because it marked the end of the settler's sea voyage from Britain. Today, Western Australia is a state of more than two million people. There are some 200 nationalities, at least 170 different languages spoken and more than 100 different faiths practised. We commemorate Foundation Day to mark a historic event; that is important. Interestingly, South Australia is the only other state to do so, with a public holiday to remember its proclamation on 28 December. At a national level, Australia Day has become a festival about Australia's history and what it means to be Australian. It has grown in significance since the bicentennial in 1988 to become a truly national day of celebration.

With the proposed Western Australia Day, we have the opportunity to broaden 1 June from simply remembering one day in history to a celebration for all who have made Western Australia their home. It is also a day to genuinely acknowledge Indigenous people as the original inhabitants and to recognise 40 000 years of Indigenous history. In my view, it would make Western Australia Day a contemporary celebration of our state and its people. I would be delighted if 1 June 2009 were to be known as Western Australia Day. I trust that members of both houses will appreciate the symbolic importance of this bill by supporting its passage through Parliament. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr R.F. Johnson**.