

WESTERN AUSTRALIA DAY (RENAMING) BILL 2011

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Norman Moore (Leader of the House)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the House) [8.57 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Western Australia Day (Renaming) Bill 2011 is to rename Foundation Day, observed annually on 1 June, as Western Australia Day. In so doing, consequential amendments will be made to the Public and Bank Holidays Act 1972 and the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993.

This issue was first presented to the Legislative Assembly in 2008 but a bill to effect the change lapsed following the prorogation of Parliament before the state general election. The member for Perth introduced a similar bill to this one in 2011. The time is right for change. It is timely to consider whether we can more effectively celebrate our origins and achievements. Western Australia is a mature, outward-looking state, with an increasingly significant role in our nation and region. We have just successfully hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the biggest international event in this state since the Empire Games in 1962. In 2012, we should reflect on Western Australia's achievements and how we have worked together to build this remarkable state.

Foundation Day commemorates the first European settlement on Western Australian land, when the British established the Swan River Colony. The British had previously created an army outpost on the south coast at King George Sound in 1826. However, favourable reports from Captain James Stirling, following his exploration of the Swan River area in 1827, led to the decision to establish a more permanent British presence. In February 1829, British settlers sailed from England to make the Swan River Colony a reality. Nearly four months later, on 1 June, those aboard the *Parmelia*, including Captain Stirling, finally saw their destination—the Western Australian coast. It is this moment in time that is regarded as Foundation Day, as it marked the end of the settlers' journey from Britain, despite the fact the settlers were prevented from landing that day due to the difficult weather conditions they encountered.

There is no doubt that 1 June 1829 is an important date in Western Australian history. Foundation Day commemorates that single moment in time, but it does not account for the way this state has been shaped by other parts of our history; nor does it provide the best opportunity to recognise the range of contributions to our society; nor does it encourage reflections on our contemporary context.

Western Australia Day will extend the scope of celebration to unite all who have made Western Australia their home. While our legal and governmental structures largely reflect a British heritage, we now number well over two million people, with a multiplicity of backgrounds and experiences. The population now includes people from some 200 nationalities, more than 170 languages can be heard and more than 100 faiths are practised. Western Australia Day will provide a means to recognise these differences, while also celebrating our commonality as people of this state. It will more readily acknowledge the rich histories of Aboriginal Western Australians, which run for tens of thousands of years before that day in 1829. Within a total population estimated between 100 000 and 200 000 at the time of European settlement, Aboriginal Western Australians comprised Nyoongah, Yamatji, Wongatha, Ngadju and many, many more.

At the outset, the colony's governors and officials promoted British migrants above all others. The population was overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic throughout the 1800s, but Chinese and Malaccan workers were employed in the pearling industry, helping to create distinctive multiracial coastal towns to the north. Later, in the 1890s, large numbers of migrants, many from other Australian colonies, followed the gold rushes. The Western Australian population underwent its most significant change with the massive immigration scheme following World War II. The influx of people born in Italy, Greece, the former Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Poland and Austria, among others, provided a rapid increase in diversity. More recently, Western Australia has provided a home for people from Vietnam, Lebanon and East Timor. Since the mid-1970s, our relatively high economic growth has provided opportunities for migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The diversity of our people provides much to celebrate, as do our achievements. From a stricken economy in the 1800s that was brought to life with the gold rushes of the 1890s, the people of Western Australia have built a state that is now a significant participant in the global economy.

Although that initial settlement by Captain Stirling and his party will always be an essential part of Western Australia Day, this celebration will go further. Western Australia Day will reflect on a shared history of perseverance, resourcefulness and creativity. It will be an appropriate celebration of our state and all its people.

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

I trust that members of both houses appreciate the symbolic importance of this bill and will support its passage through Parliament. I commend the bill to the house and table the explanatory memorandum.

[See paper 4341.]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.