

Australia Day Address 2010

The Magic Power of Creative Individuals to Influence

Last year was a time of great devastation and anguish for many of our fellow Australians as the impact of the Black Saturday fires and the terrible loss of life and property became known.

That awful situation created a truly wonderful response from our Shire community as a vast range of activities, events, fundraisers, donations and other forms of support to the stricken communities, including the massive effort of our SES and CFA services and the practical support provided to farmers and to sick and starving animals and wildlife.

So many people and organisations leapt in to arrange creative, interesting and engaging things for us to do which not only ensured we raised well over \$100,000 in direct cash alone for the Appeal, but had some genuinely terrific community bonding activities and fun in the process.

These numerous individuals and organisations which rose so splendidly to the occasion for the most part were not organised into what they did, but saw a need and committed to make something positive happen. Their efforts and our overall result is something we should all be really proud of.

Later in the year wild weather, this time in the form of a storm, lashed our Shire with one fatality in Maryborough and much serious damage to houses and property especially in Talbot. Again the ready and immediate response of all sections of the community was a fine achievement.

During the year we also faced a different challenge when our printing industry jobs were under challenge from proposed changes to tariffs. Again many organisations and individuals creatively rushed into support the campaign to retain our printing jobs. This even included a Prayer Meeting organised by the Maryborough Minister's Fraternal.

The history of Australia is full of similar fine stories about communities and individuals rising to tackle, head on, natural disasters, wars, economic hardship and other major challenges. A little later this year and we will commemorate Anzac Day and the birth of the Anzac tradition of great achievements, bravery and looking out for each other in times of great stress.

But what about ordinary times when there is no rallying call? What about the day to day things that demand our creativity and initiative and energy in working on so much that needs our support and attention in the environment and community we live? How involved or committed are we then? How readily do we volunteer to make a difference for the better? Do we just wait for the "big ticket" events and assume someone else will do what is needed for day to day things? Do we mislead ourselves into thinking we needn't bother unless there is a crisis?

The famous historian Professor Arnold Toynbee in his "Study of History"* examined the rise and fall of the world's civilizations to see what factors were responsible for their

success and disintegration. Toynbee noted that success of civilizations was dependent on three things: (i) creative leadership; (ii) resulting inspiration and support; and (iii) the social cohesion and strong community sense which followed. When these elements were no longer present, disintegration took place.

Each of today's Australia Day awards recognise especially fine contribution and creativity.

My hope is this creativity being recognised in these Awards will inspire us all to support our community and commit to make a difference for the better not only in times of crisis but in day to day needs of our environment and our community.

In this way the "magic power" of these creative individuals to influence us to commit and work together in a connected community and society takes place as Toynbee observed.

On behalf of my fellow councillors CEO and staff I wish you a wonderfully happy Australia Day.

* Arnold J Toynbee "A Study of History" (Abridgement by D C Somervell) OUP 1960
Ps 245-246.

(This address was presented at Maryborough and Dunolly)