



**Australian Government**  
**Indigenous Business Australia**

## **Transcript – video recording of Dr Dawn Casey, NAIDOC Week breakfast, 10 July 2009**

This is a transcript of a seven minute video recording of Dr Dawn Casey, Chair of Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) addressing the second annual NAIDOC week breakfast, hosted by IBA at the Brisbane Convention Centre on 10 July 2009.

### **Transcript begins:**

(Recording opens with sound of applause, and sound of clinking cutlery and plates as attendees are eating breakfast.)

Good morning everybody.

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional Yuggera people and pay my respects to the Elders, past and present. And all the dignitaries that are here today, the Minister. I'd like to acknowledge Bob Blair who's been Acting in the Chair for a long period of time, and who I've known of but had never really quite met until in recent weeks. Not only is Bob deeply committed to Aboriginal affairs and has fantastic ideas; he's *such* a delightful person to work with, so nice. So, a big clap for Bob Blair.

(Sound of applause.)

Indigenous Business Australia staff are participating in NAIDOC celebrations in 21 locations throughout Australia and I'm just honoured to be the Chair.

On behalf of the IBA Board and staff I'd like to thank you all for coming this morning - because I know it's a bit tedious sometimes getting out of bed to come to breakfast sessions - and in joining with us today to celebrate our second annual NAIDOC Week breakfast function.

It is with feelings of pride and in trepidation that I take on the role of the Chairperson of Indigenous Business Australia. And I have to say I'm just delighted, Jenny, that you announced it here in my home state of Queensland; yes, I'm a Queenslander.

(Sound of laughter from audience)

The trepidation is, I suspect, because I have been in the Public Service for over 35 years. During that time I have been involved in Indigenous policies and programs under several Prime Ministers including Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke, Keating, Howard and now Kevin Rudd, who's also a Queenslander.

(Sound of laughter from audience.)

And whilst...as you can see the extremes...you can imagine the extremes in policies and programs. And whilst there has been change, the most important lesson I have learned over time is that the momentum can be stopped as we saw - if we don't bring the rest of Australia with us...as we saw with the election of John Howard in 1996.

As pointed out by Robert Manne in the book *'The Howard Years'* the changes of attitudes that supported the enlightened Indigenous policies throughout the '60s, '70s and '80s was inspired and supported only by the affluent and well educated.

COAG is to be congratulated on adopting a truly integrated and outcome focused approach for the development of policies and delivery of programs for closing the gap.

Under the Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy it provides for strengthening capacity, engagement and to promote a strong and positive view of Indigenous identity and culture. This is an area I am passionate about and am familiar with, being involved as a Museum Director. And I strongly reiterate that it was equally important for the promotion to occur in the wider Australian community. The role of Reconciliation, and support of Reconciliation by the Government, is critically important. Every week newspapers allocate substantial space to Indigenous issues, mostly negative, and some written by our own Indigenous people. Many would argue that this is being open, transparent and reversing political correctness. I would suggest, for the most part, it is tabloid journalism and simply reinforces the stereotyping of Indigenous Australians.

William Dampier, you might be surprised, who published the first bestselling travel books about Australia - around the reign of Queen Anne - set the fashion for an unsympathetic press on Aboriginal people. And although many would argue Dampier presented accurate anthropological observations about Aboriginal people from the Kimberleys – tall, slender, slight limbs, heavily-boned eyebrows, eyes troubled by flies - his perceptions were clouded by European values. In an age when trade benefited one country at the expense of others, bourgeois and Protestant Christianity, naked heathens lacking goods for trade and who neither farm nor husband animals, epitomise the negation of an ordered society.

Dampier's contemptuous and oft-quoted dictum – *'the inhabitants of this country are the miserablest people in the world'* – is still being echoed as a self-justification by the land-takers a couple of centuries later today.

Today is my second day as Chair of IBA and I feel privileged to hold two positions. One as Museum Director where I can share with millions of visitors - including school children - the rich complex, ancient, sophisticated and enduring Indigenous culture. And together with the long struggle for recognition and the impact of the removal of children, with people who come through museums... Because museums are trusted organisations and if you do it well, we will and do change attitudes.

And the other which is as the Chair of IBA, which enables Indigenous people to own their own homes and businesses, and through investment creates jobs for Indigenous people. Economic development is a key component to closing the gap.

When looking at the theme for this year's NAIDOC celebrations *Honouring our Elders, Nurturing Our Youth*, and realising that this is my first public engagement as Chair of IBA, I had cause to stop and think about my mother who died a couple of years ago. She rang me after hearing the news that the Howard Government was not renewing my contract at the National Museum of Australia. And she said to me, *'Dawn weren't you working hard enough? After 25 years in the Commonwealth Government you're leaving?'*

(Sound of laughter from audience.)

You know I believe she is looking down from up there somewhere, and sighing with relief that I have been accepted back into the Commonwealth fold.

Thank you.

(Sound of applause.)

**End of transcript**

Source of quotation: Emeritus Professor John Mulvaney, *Prehistory and Heritage: The Writings of John Mulvaney* 1990