



20 January 2021

Doug

Dear Mayor ~~Hawkins~~ OAM and Liverpool Plains Shire Council,

Australia Day 2021 Liverpool Plains Shire Council

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be part of Australia Day 2021 in the Liverpool Plains. Jodie and I were overwhelmed by the support and generosity of the community in Quirindi, Warrah Creek, Werris Creek and surrounding areas. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting all the council members and the opportunity to gather and share stories on the evening prior to Australia Day.

The community activities were wonderful. We felt embraced by the community and enjoyed seeing the looks on the faces of Australia Day award recipients and our newest Australians. Jodie and I enjoyed connecting with people across the community, speaking with our farmers, and learning more about the impact of the drought. It was wonderful to meet Elizabeth Gallagher and Geoff Berwick and have lunch in the Hall at Warrah Creek. Thank you and Cr Ian Lobsey OAM for a memorable visit to the First and Second Fleet Memorial Gardens at Wallabadah. Thank you to Wayne Moyer and Werris Creek Lions Club for their efforts. The fireworks at Werris Creek are among the best that I have experienced in my life.

As mentioned during my visit, this was a significant trip for our family. It provided an opportunity to connect with country and learn more about my Kamilaroi heritage. I was able to visit where my Great Grandmother grew up, where my Grandparents subsequently returned to run the Caroon Mission at Walhallow, and where my mum lived and went to school. We were grateful that several people had made the effort to attend the Australia Day ceremony and pass on their respects to our family. I was deeply moved by stories of my Grandfather, who passed when I was only 10 years old. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for embracing my mother, Yvonne and sister, Lizzie during our visit.

Thank you to Andrew Ballard and Christie Pearson for their administrative efforts. The coordination of accommodation, travel, events and activities was smooth and seamless. A true credit to their tireless work and commitment. I would like to thank and make special mention of Nikki Robertson at the Liverpool Plains Visitor Information Centre for connecting me with Virginia Wood. Virginia, a local artist painted me a very special painting to recognise my 'sacred journey' back to country. This is a beautiful and thoughtful gift. Unfortunately, I was unable to meet with Virginia during our visit, however we were able to connect remotely via video conference.



Since our return, I have been fortunate to receive correspondence from Jason Allan, Sally Alden and Skye Davis. I am looking forward to staying connected. It is my hope and intention to return to the Liverpool Plains later this year to share stories with the teachers and students at Quirindi High School and Walhallow Public School. Please let me know if there are any other significant community events that I may be in a position to support.

Finally, thank you again for the invitation and opportunity to visit Liverpool Plains and participate in Australia Day activities. The community spirit was tremendous. I wish the council all the best in your endeavours to build a strong and vibrant community. All the very best to everyone across the community for a healthy and prosperous year ahead and beyond.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized 'B' and 'F' that are interconnected, followed by a horizontal line.

Ben Farinazzo
Australia Day Ambassador