

SPEECH BY
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CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURAL AND
ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION
VOTE OF THANKS TO THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. KEVIN RUDD MP
FOR THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE OZASIA SYMPOSIUM
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There is a dynamic and power when cultures come together and connect.

When art and ideas rub shoulders.

It leads us to the fertile ground of empathy and understanding.

The horizons that locate us expand and we are enlightened.

This city is such an expression of that: its founder, Colonel William Light, was half English, half Malay.

Given its geography - what was then seen as hanging upside down at the very end of the far end of the world - it might have had the potential to be a place narrow and confined and backward.

Instead ideals and ideas flowed to this place and rubbed together, fired notions of the possible.

This place became the first place in the world where all the citizens could vote, and by secret printed ballot, and all could stand for parliament, regardless of race, gender or origin.

This is a spirit of place which locates the very idea of the interaction of cultures, perspectives and insights.

We can find expressions of that everywhere we care to look.

I think of Sir Doug Nicholls, Australia's first indigenous Governor, here in South Australia.

I think of Don Dunstan and his vision of Multiculturalism that goes back 40 years.

Australians of Asian descent like myself and Senator Penny Wong are deeply aware of the richness cultural interaction has brought us.

It was not lost on the world when an Australian Prime Minister stood before an audience in Beijing and addressed them in their own language.

It bespoke of a leader whose interest in their country was not some passing diplomatic whim, but whose engagement was deep and profound.

The symbolism was extraordinary, and the substance substantial:

- It symbolised our deep respect for a culture that enriches us,
- It expressed the substance and openness of our engagement.

He spoke in words that could not be escaped, not lost through the net of translation.

For that, Prime Minister, we thank you.

And we thank you for your words and insights today.

Words that come from a personal understanding, linguistic and otherwise, of the inspiring possibilities of what our cultural engagement with Asia can be.