



***Launch of the Australian Academy
of Race Relations***

Murdoch University

Thursday, 24 June 2004

By

**The Hon David K Malcolm AC
Chief Justice of Western Australia**



I acknowledge that the Nyoongah people are the traditional owners of this land here at Murdoch and thank Ms Marie Taylor for her Nyoongah welcome to country.

I am very honoured and privileged to have been invited not only to launch the Australian Academy of Race Relations, but also to accept the invitation of Murdoch University to be the inaugural Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Academy. I am one of those who has a strong belief in the capacity of Australia to develop a truly tolerant multi-cultural society constituted by our population.

My forebears on my father's side of my family were among the first settlers in South Australia under the leadership of William Wakefield in 1836. One of these was my great grandfather. My great grandfather on my mother's side came to Western Australia as Secretary to Governor Hutt in 1839. He was also Clerk of the Legislative Council.

When Hutt returned to Scotland in 1839, great grandfather, a Scottish lawyer, stayed on and in 1848 he was appointed Government Resident and Magistrate at York as well as Protector of the Aborigine. Compared to others, he was very enlightened and was much admired by many Aboriginal people. His name was Walkinshaw Cowan. One of his sons, James, was also a lawyer who married a young lady from Geraldton named Edith Brown, who became Edith Cowan, the first woman to be elected to Parliament in what was then the British Empire.

Since the time of settlement people of many different origins, including refugees, displaced persons and others, have made their home in Australia. In our search for peace, order and good government we have had to tackle a number of problems which arise in a context where people



of many different races and cultural background have been brought together. While much of our attention has been focused on the position of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, it is important to remember that our population is drawn from more than 180 countries practising nearly 100 different religions.

It is in this context that the Centre for Social Change and Social and Community Research has become the home of the Academy of Race Relations here at Murdoch University.

Inspiration for the establishment of the Academy came from the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001 at Durban, South Africa. The Conference set explicit goals and actions for combating racism at both global and local levels. The documents produced by the Conference deal specifically with cultural diversity, and the role of international financial institutions, corporations and other non-governmental organisations in combating racism.

It was recognised that there was an urgent need to establish an appropriate organisation in Australia, the primary role of which was to educate against racism.

I anticipate that the Academy will play a major role in providing an appropriate educational environment within which to deal with racial problems which may arise from time to time and to develop a safe educational environment to deal with racism and its effects. The Academy will present a new opportunity for community members, organisations, governments and faith communities to conduct an open and mutually respectful dialogue about racism and the development of strategies to combat it.



I also note that the Academy will complement the Anti-Racism Strategy of the State Government and offer the opportunity for both the community and government to work collaboratively to provide a better understanding of racism and related issues and to develop and conduct programs that will bring out positive change in our communities.

I note with approval that it is proposed that the Academy will have a national orientation and establish international links with counterpart organisations. This is important to enable our community to deal effectively with issues of race in order to foster the continuing improvement of Australia's multicultural society, as well as have a positive impact upon our international relations. I look forward very much to working with Murdoch University on this project.

I shall be privileged to be a part of it.

It is with great pleasure that I formally launch the Australian Academy of Race Relations. I wish the Academy every success in its endeavours.