



Above: Dr Noel Alpins guest speaker at St. Arnaud Australia Day is pictured with the Young Citizen of the Year, Kate Gifford.

An Aussie address by an aussie ambassador

DR Noel Alpins, the guest ambassador at St. Arnaud Australia Day was one of the 145 Ambassadors speaking at Australia Day celebrations throughout Australia and he gave an interesting and informative picture of Australia which was relevant and recognised by his audience.

His own story is a typical Aussie tale, which many of us have also experienced in various forms.

He spoke of his early life as "pretty good at the academic side of school but sport was a challenge".

"I wasn't in the firsts or even in the seconds" he said, which was OK for his fellow Australians.

There are plenty of people who are good at sport but brilliant eye surgeons are a much better proposition for us when the chips are down!

A typical Aussie childhood of growing up that included a shortage of pocket money solved by selling bottles after jumping Gardiner's Creek, into the Kooyong Tennis Courts to collect them, had a familiar ring.

Dr Alpins was fiercely independent and said that he sent back a cheque his mother had sent him when, between school and University, he was picking grapes at Mildura.

Independence is a great motivator and after service in the Australian Air Force, Dr Noel started as a GP.

In 1973 to gain experience, and after completing extra studies and exams, he moved to the Eye and Ear Hospital to train as an

eye specialist.

Eventually his independent spirit caused him to set up his own practice and this has taken him all over the world as he followed his passion to find the best treatments for his patients.

This picture of growing up and living in Australia was a familiar story to the audience in Pioneer Park, which in itself, is an example of a community that set out and succeeded in creating a beautiful park from a mine sand dump, solely by the hard work and determination of the people themselves.

The speech led into the presentation of Australia Day, Australians and all that makes us the people we are today.

Dr Alpins quoted from Bernard Shaw "that Patriotism is the conviction that your country is superior to all others because you were born in it".

He said that we have gained much from others who have come here with their own traditions and distinctions and added that we are one of the few nations where more people want to come to live than to want to leave.

"For much of our history we have accepted people from across the

world and we have done a reasonable job of welcoming them."

"In turn our immigrants have contributed greatly to building the nation we are so proud of today."

"Perhaps related to friendliness, is our strong sense of fairness.

"As a nation we more than salute equality or opportunity - we mostly expect it and insist on it."

Dr Alpins quoted the response of Australians to disasters such as the fires and floods with all the help they could produce, as a matter of course."

"We take these values for granted in this country but they are fabulous assets and we should celebrate them more" he said.

"For me" he concluded "living in Australia is like moving into a new home and finding the street is clean and safe and full of people who look out for one another."

"That is the kind of nation I hope we want to keep building.

"That is worth having a special day to celebrate what makes this nation great." he said.

The celebration concluded with morning tea, provided at the Town Hall by the CWA.



Award winners and participants at St. Arnaud

Above: Award winners at St. Arnaud (left to right) members of the Festival Committee John & Jan Dods and Greg Murray (President), Marg Batters (Citizen Of The Year), Kate Gifford (Young Citizen), the Mayor Cr. Dorothy Patton, Ambassador Dr. Noel Alpins and Beryl Crone (Senior Citizen Award).

Right: 'Happy Australia Day', say young Hamish and Ella Darby with parents Alison and Roydon Darby.

