



FROM THE COAST

Freedom of Entry

As President of the Shire of Esperance it was such an honour to be involved in granting Freedom of Entry to Commanding Officer Ian Bray of the submarine, HMAS Farncomb and the entire ship's Company when they arrived in Esperance last week.

The Freedom of Entry dates back to medieval times when fortress walls afforded cities protection from intruders. The citizens of those walled cities wisely refused to allow entry to armed groups, including troops, unless they were absolutely sure that those arms would not be used against them.

The event held on Thursday while remaining traditional, also incorporated elements relevant to our time and place. It provided an opportunity for the Esperance community to be part of an exciting, historical ceremony that cemented the bond, initiated in 1995, between HMAS Farncomb and our beautiful town.

The crew of HMAS Farncomb mustered in their whites near the Whale Tail, falling in and forming the parade body before the Flag party were marched on. It gave me a thrill, along with Commanding Officer Ian Bray, to inspect the guard as is the custom. Aboriginal Noongar Elders Gail Reynolds-Adamson and Annie Dabb conducted the Welcome to Country. The scroll was read and presented to the Commanding Officer and the spectacular parade marched along the Esplanade, passing between fire pits for the smoking ceremony held by Tjaltjraak members to ward off evil spirits.

The procession, which included a full brass band, was followed closely by excited community members, passing the 10th Light Horse Brigade, up Andrew St until the local police halted the party, challenging them to prove their Freedom of Entry. The scroll was presented and inspected for authenticity by Deputy President Natalie Bowman.

The parade continued along Dempster St, passing the dais at the RSL and saluting the dignitaries present before concluding the march and being dismissed. They then joined the waiting crowd and joined the gathering at the war memorial.

This unique event full of pomp, ceremony, celebrations and activities was embraced by the community who came out in droves to get swept up in the ritual and excitement of this momentous occasion.

Thank you to the hard working Shire staff, and community members who were involved in organising this fabulous ceremonial event, the service clubs who cooked up a storm for all who attended, and everyone who took part, or helped put it together in any way big or small. What a show! Thank you also to those who turned out to warmly welcome the Farncomb. This was a once in a lifetime event, and although the submarine has now left, we certainly hope to welcome back our esteemed visitors to their affiliated town in the future.