



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIA DAY

Friday 26 January, 2018

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria
The Hon Matthew Guy MP, Leader of the Opposition
Councillor Arron Wood, Acting Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne
Assistant Commissioner Stephen Leane, Representing the Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police
Senior Australian Defence Force Officers,
Major General David Coghlan AM
Air Commodore Glen Braz, CSC, DSM
Commodore Greg Yorke, CSC, RANR
Members of the Consular Corps
Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin AO, Senior Wurundjeri Elder
Dr Susan Alberti AC, Victorian Chair of the Australia Day Committee
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls

I thank Auntie Joy for her warm welcome to country, and in the same spirit of recognition and reconciliation that her welcome was offered, I pay my respects to the traditional owners of this land where we gather, to elders past and present, and to elders with us this morning.

We gather to celebrate Australia Day, our national day.

In our diverse community, a national day can represent different things to different people.

For indigenous Australians, there is the inevitable reflection on the many thousands of years that they were of this land before Europeans arrived, of the turmoil experienced thereafter, and of the continuing importance of recognition and reconciliation.

To many who have come from afar, and for the almost half of us who were born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas, there is the inevitable reflection on this land as a place of security and promise, of safety, of freedom, of opportunity and a fair go for ourselves and our families.

To many others, it is a land that generations have now called home, the place they have loved and helped to build. They reflect on the history, across two World Wars, in which many had loved ones who died for this country. They reflect on the good times and the tough times, whether politically, economically or experienced through bushfires, floods and drought.

As we gather together today to celebrate Australia, I am well aware that there is currently some reflection about the best day upon which to do so.

That is not a discussion for me to join. Policy and politics are for others. They are not the domain of the Governor. Nor is it for the Governor to take a stance between the differing points of view.

What I can say, however, is that such discussion goes to the very heart of what we DO celebrate as we gather: what we can ALL proudly celebrate together.

This discussion, like so many other significant public conversations, reflects the freedom that we as Australians have, to hold and to express differing opinions. It reflects the rules and culture of our nation, that seek to ensure that different opinions can be expressed openly and respectfully.

The fact that we are free and safe to hold such public discourse, on a subject as fundamentally important as this, is something not enjoyed in every country.

Here, we can be confident that different perspectives are protected by a democratic framework and the rule of law. We can have faith in the integrity of our elections and our parliamentary processes, and the integrity of our courts.

All that said, our day of national celebration should not be one for chest-beating about how GOOD we are but, rather, to pause, and to recognise how FORTUNATE we are.

Even more importantly, the day when we gather as a nation gives us the opportunity to reflect on what each one of us can do to make Australia even better.

To make sure that we listen with open hearts and minds to indigenous Australians, and the recognition that they seek.

To make sure that we are always welcoming to those who join us here, no matter where they come from.

To make sure that every one of us can share in the bountiful opportunities this country can provide.

To ensure that we help those who need a helping hand, that we live harmoniously with each other, despite any differences between us, and that we deal with each other respectfully and with kindness.

What we need to reflect upon today is what we can each contribute to make this a clever and prosperous nation, and a fair and united community.

What we need to do is to ensure that, when our children and our grandchildren gather around our flag to celebrate Australia, we have passed down to them the same national strengths that we strive for today, and that we have instilled in them a commitment to continue to build upon those strengths for future generations.

So, let's gather together in a spirit of harmony.

Let's be grateful to our Defence Force men and women and to all those courageous Australians from every walk of life, scattered across the globe, doing what they can to make the world more peaceful and more safe.

Let's be mindful of those who face this day without family around them, or with ill-health or battling with grief or sadness.

Let's strive together to ensure that all within our community can enjoy – in the words of Victoria's State motto, both 'Peace and Prosperity'.

Tony joins me in wishing each and every Victorian and every visitor to our great State, all the very best on this Australia Day.