



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIA DAY 2020 RECEPTION

Tuesday 21st January 2020

The Honourable Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Public Transport, and Ports and Freight, representing the Premier

The Honourable Colin Brooks MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and **Mrs Melinda Brooks**

The Rt Revd the Hon Dr Peter Hollingworth AC OBE, Former Governor-General of Australia and **Mrs Ann Hollingworth**

Professor The Honourable David de Kretser AC, Former Governor of Victoria and **Mrs Jan de Kretser**

The Honourable Ted Baillieu, Former Premier of Victoria and **Mrs Robyn Baillieu**

The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Melbourne Councillor Sally Capp and **Mr Andrew Sutherland**

Department Heads and Victorian Commissioners

Senior Officers in Victoria of the Australian Defence Force

Members of the Consular Corps

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us this evening.

Tony and I welcome you – a cross-section of our wonderful Victorian community – to celebrate Australia Day with us at Government House.

This year, the celebration is somewhat muted: clouded – literally, as well as figuratively – by the bushfires consuming so much of our land.

We think of the lives tragically cut short and the loved ones who are grieving, of the homes and livelihoods lost, the stock and wildlife lost and the landscapes ravaged.

Often, as Australia Day approaches, we reflect on what it means to be Australian. Well, right now, the worst of circumstances in our country has shown us the best of our people.

In recent weeks, we have watched many thousands fighting the fires, and fighting them again, and again. And we know that they are not done yet.

We have seen them defending property for others when they know that their own is at risk.

We have seen so many from all the emergency services, who have been called in to work around the clock – whether on the front or in control, incident and dispatch centres around the State.

We see the men and women of the ADF, their skills, but also their kindness. A smile. A game with a youngster. A pat for a family pet boarding a ship, to relieve the tension. Their determination as they work on the clean-up.

We have seen the generosity within local businesses as they open their doors to ensure supplies are on hand. Wherever, whenever, however they're needed.

And all the community organisations who have been mustered to step in as required, offering practical help and moral support.

We also see Victorians giving: donating money and goods, and volunteering hours, days and weeks of their time.

Last year, Tony and I saw something else. I was honoured to be the Patron of the Ten Year Commemoration of the 2009 Bushfires. In that capacity, we visited many of the affected communities.

Over and over again we saw communities that had rebuilt. It had not been easy. Years of blood, sweat and many tears had gone into it. But we saw communities that had worked together. That had come back strong. That had recovered.

And so, as we reflect on the courage and the kindness that abounds in the midst of these fires, and we reflect with optimism as to what will be achieved in recovery, we know that we really don't need to look very far to understand the essence of what it is to be Australian, and what we can celebrate on Australia Day.

Of course, as the proud Governor of Victoria I am, by default, Victoria-centric, but as the fire fronts on the border of New South Wales and Victoria merged, I had the heightened appreciation that borders are man-made. We are all Australians. We are all in this together.

Knowing that, we can be confident that no matter what the summer still has in store for us, the courageous, tenacious and kind Australian spirit will prevail.

And so, we wish each one of you a safe and happy Australia Day.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Minister Horne to address us.