



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## ORDER OF AUSTRALIA INVESTITURE CEREMONIES

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to Government House today.

In 1915, as the world was gripped by a war that had no equal in its severity and destruction – Banjo Paterson penned a poem to Australian soldiers fighting overseas.

In his work, Paterson spoke of the unity that was beginning to grip all Australians – no matter their background:

*“And with Australia’s flag shall fly  
A spray of wattle bough,  
To symbolise our unity, We’re all Australians now.”*

The poem, titled ‘We’re All Australians Now’, reflects the sense of community that emerged from supporting Australians overseas and at home in the Great War (as it was called).

And despite the hardship – Australians found an identity and a mythos that helped us through the darkness of that period.

A sense of unity arose from the ashes of The Great War, binding people together through a shared duty to their community – regardless of heritage or creed.

While the circumstances of recent global and local challenges are vastly different, the need to draw on and work with the community as a whole for support remains.

It is in this same spirit that we are here today for the Order of Australia Honours Award.

These awards are not only about individual achievement – they reflect the strength of Victorian communities.

When Banjo Paterson proclaimed more than 100 years ago that 'we're all Australians now,' we were still reliant on the British honours system to recognise the contributions of our peers.

It took another 60 years before the Australian Honours System was introduced to provide a means for our country to recognise the service of our citizens.

In recognising these achievements, we speak to what we value as a community, and the kinds of characteristics and ideas that we wish to celebrate.

Indeed, nearly half of this year's awards honour service to various Victorian communities – particularly those in regional and rural areas.

As Governor, I have the opportunity to visit regional Victoria and speak with the people who call these places home.

It is always incredible to see the community spirit that thrives in our State – particularly the high levels of volunteerism.

And it is always special when someone talks to me about the time they visited Government House to receive their Order of Australia, and about what that recognition means to them.

Whether you're receiving your award today for your volunteer service, for your profession or for a particular achievement – you are being celebrated by your community for contributions that we admire and value.

For every award that is invested today, there are countless Victorians that have been uplifted by your work.

Today, we are gathered to recognise your achievements – and to bring what might have been little told stories to light.

The honours system serves as an open and shared recognition of selfless efforts dedicated to the people of Victoria.

And in that spirit, I encourage everyone here to think of other unsung heroes and consider putting them forward for nomination.

To all family and friends gathered here today, I'd like to extend my personal thanks for your support to those being honoured today.

I am sure that all recipients would agree that receiving this honour was a team effort, backed by the support of loved ones.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate everyone who is being recognised today.

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, your actions have served our community.

And regardless of background or heritage, it is through your efforts that we can still proudly say that: *"we're all Australians now"*.