



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

# OFFICIAL AUSTRALIA DAY FLAG RAISING CEREMONY

## Sunday 26 January 2025

### Acknowledgments

**The Honourable Jacinta Allan**, Premier of Victoria

**Professor James Angus**, Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, and **Helen Angus**

**The Honourable David Davis**, representing the Leader of the Opposition

**Acting Deputy Commissioner David Clayton**, representing the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police

**Brigadier Cameron Purdey**, representing Major General Jason Blain, **Captain Ben Favelle** and **Air Commodore Joseph Medved**, representing Air Commodore David Strong, Senior Victorian Officers of the Australian Defence Force

**Heads of religious and multicultural communities**

**Senior members and Commissioners of the Victorian Public Service**

**Members of the Consular Corps**

**Distinguished guests**

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

Thank you to Uncle Mark Brown for his warm welcome.

I would also like to acknowledge Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Annette Xiberras who was unable to join us this morning.

My first memories of Australia Day are memories of the last days of summer holidays - those glorious moments before the inevitable return to the everyday where your time is no longer your own.

If you grew up in Australia, the rhythm of summer is marked by this last holiday. It carries the memories of shimmering heat and water, the smell of eucalypts, sunscreen, sand and salt.

These days, for me, the morning of Australia Day is speaking at our State's official celebrations. This means ceremony, such as this flag-raising – a salute to our nationhood.

On this day, some are honoured by our nation, with Orders of Australia for their contributions to our community.

For many others it is the day they become Australian citizens.

Our anthem is played, and many struggle to remember the second verse.

In citizenship ceremonies the sentiments of the song, "I am Australian" speak to the modern Australia we claim, where, as the lyrics go:

*"We are one, but we are many  
And from all the lands of earth we come"*

Countless times we sing that *"we'll share a dream ..."* that we are all Australians.

On this day when we celebrate Australia, we should spend a moment to think about this dream we might all share.

We also recognise, when we celebrate Australia, on this date, the original inhabitants of this large island are reminded that this is the day the British claimed this land as a colony of the Empire.

We now celebrate Australia Day on 26th January, but this is not the day we became the modern nation, Australia.

It was on January 1, 1901, in a big celebration, the Commonwealth of Australia was declared by the first Governor-General in Sydney in Centennial Park.

And later that year on 9 May the first national Parliament met in Melbourne, Victoria in the Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton.

I've come to realise the history of the people on this island from its First Peoples to the creation of a modern nation are not as widely known as we should expect.

We should think about what the people who voted for Federation hoped for from our nation.

Australia, this Federation, was not created swiftly. The first steps began almost fifty years before 1901 – only a few short years after the colony of Victoria separated from New South Wales.

The path to Federation was laid out through dialogue and negotiation – guided by a collective will.

People's conventions debated federation, and the final decision was made by people voting in ballots in the colonies - with the largest, and overwhelming, majority in favour here in Victoria.

Federating with the pen, rather than the sword, is something we should recall with pride.

For people at the time were proud of what they were creating and how it was created.

A poem by David Christie Murray written during the debates illustrates this sentiment. Here I quote some lines:

*Because they live among us, and we know*

*The unheroic detail of their days ....  
We scant the greatness of the deed they do.  
They weld an empire, not in old world wise...  
But in calm conclave, where each citizen  
May speak his share of truth with fearless eyes.*

Alfred Deakin – Victoria's most significant proponent of Federation – laid out his vision for our nation during a Federation Convention, recognising the hopes and the destinies that would be affected.

He said:

*“It will be a union with strong foundations set deep in justice ...and a perpetual security for the peace, freedom and progress of the people of Australia, giving to them ...through all the generations, the priceless heritage of a happy and united land.”* (1898 Federation Convention in Melbourne)

Australia's Constitution is not distinguished by its bold or democratic rhetoric. Yet Australia was the first nation to provide through its Constitution the rights of women to vote and to stand for election.

And taking up the secret ballot, known at the time as the Australian ballot, (first introduced in Tasmania, Victoria, and South Australia in 1856), this new Constitution safeguarded Australian democracy.

And reinforced democracy with the introduction of compulsory voting in 1924.

We should celebrate that it was enactment of a popular vote that created Australia, through Federation and that the Constitution enshrined strong democratic principles.

The original Constitution was imperfect, reflecting the racism of the times and did not accord equal rights to Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Yet it also contained the provision for referenda, votes of the people, to change the Constitution, reflecting new demands and concerns.

The hopes of the drafters that this would allow for regular change of the Constitution have not been realised.

But the means to do so remain with us, the people of Australia.

In those halcyon days of the end of summer holidays, when I was young, I did not think about what Federation meant for the creation of our nation.

I enjoyed the place where I was born, to which many of my forebears were sent unwillingly as convicts, and to which all my forebears came with the hope of a better future.

I embraced the 'serenity' that I took for granted.

I now have the privilege of traveling across Victoria, seeing places and people building, as well as transforming, this State.

I learn of things I never knew – and I am enthralled and proud of what people are doing. And I am inspired by so many who give back, through their volunteering, to their communities.

I have seen the hardship and adversity some face, yet I also see a community committed to progress, a community with strong systems of justice and democracy, and a community blessed with more happiness than not.

We are, as we were at Federation, not frightened to experiment, but also as the history of referenda following Federation makes clear, reluctant to make wholesale changes.

We are not perfect.

We should take these moments of celebration to consider what we have done and still must do.

Reflecting on the creation of this nation, on this Australia Day, we might look to the hopes of the founders that we would have “...*the priceless heritage of a happy and united land.*”

As we work to preserve our democracy, and advance Australia, what supports the priceless heritage – to be both “happy and united”?

We are no strangers to conflicts in the world, but how we respond to division requires the calm consideration and dialogue that our founders brought to creating the nation.

On this Day, let us pay attention to the Australia we are celebrating and what we should never take for granted.