



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIA DAY: FLAG RAISING CEREMONY
Thursday 26 January 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, Acting Premier of Victoria

The Hon. David Davis MP, representing the Leader of the Opposition

Shane Patton APM, Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police

Major General Andrew Bottrell CSC and Bar DSM, Commodore Greg Yorke AM CSC and

Air Commodore David Strong, Senior Victorian Officers of the Australian Defence Force

Ziad Itani, Dean of the Consular Corps and **Members of the Consular Corps**

Distinguished guests

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to Elders of other communities who may be with us.

Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin AO was going to join us today but unfortunately, last minute was unable to attend. She has participated at this event and many others across many years and we warmly thank her.

I have had the privilege to address the Victorian people now across eight Australia Days, and to continue the tradition of welcoming diverse groups here at Government House on and around this occasion.

I look back at what I have said across those years.

I have reflected on sadnesses that we as a community have experienced: the pandemic, bushfires and the Bourke Street incident that, in 2017, had just occurred.

This year, the recent floods are front of mind.

Of course, I have also reflected on so much to celebrate, including our nation's freedoms, and our State's many successes. And the gratitude we share for all the kindness and care shown by so many in those darker times, and indeed, every day.

Gratitude lies at the heart of so much of what we reflect on when we gather upon an important civic occasion.

Gratitude to the First Peoples who have cared for this land for so long.

Gratitude to those who created, and those who have fought to protect our democratic framework.

Gratitude to those who have joined us as Australians and made us the richer for their presence.

What, in combination, Noel Pearson has described as: *'Our ancient heritage, our British inheritance and our multicultural triumph.'*

This year, I want to add to those reflections.

It is impossible to be unaware of the community debate about when best to celebrate our national day. And, of course, I know that opinions on the topic vary.

For First Peoples, there is much hurt and pain around this date, given the import of the historical events of 26 January 1788, and beyond.

For the majority of Australians, 26 January is the only date they have ever known as the day on which we gather as a nation. Many have family and community traditions around it – decades long.

Some support a change of date. Others do not. Each group holds their opinions dearly.

It is, therefore, a difficult topic. But, if we are truly a mature, strong, and clever nation - and that claim is not just jingoistic rhetoric - then we must be capable of dealing with the difficult topics upon which our opinions differ.

This one, and others.

It takes effort, insight and goodwill.

It takes **effort** to listen to each other.

It takes **insight and goodwill** to acknowledge that decent people can hold different views. That they can hold their views strongly, without one being immutably right and the other wrong, or one good and the other evil.

The need to listen to opposing views is not peculiar to this country, this decade or this topic.

At a speech at the University of Arizona in 2011, President Barack Obama entreated that when we address issues upon which we differ, we need to talk with each other in '*a way that heals*', rather than in '*a way that wounds*'.

Closer to home, in 1982, speaking at a Farewell Dinner for Governor-General The Right Honourable Sir Zelman Cowen AK GCMG GCVO QC, Prime Minister The Right Honourable Malcolm Fraser AC CH congratulated His Excellency on his ability to '*help people of different ideologies or opinions realise that they have, in the end, one great cause, and that is Australia.*'

As there is debate around Australia Day, let's not fall prey to the irony that the respect, harmony, and diversity that we seek to celebrate on our national day, become the very things undermined by disrespectful argument about the date.

And let's commit, as we gather today, to discuss this – and the other topics upon which we might differ – in a way that heals, rather than in a way that wounds.

The continuing success of our nation depends on a balanced recognition of those who have cared for it for millennia, of those who built and have protected the modern nation and of all those who have joined us and continue to join us, adding their culture, their skills and their own contributions.

It depends, not on us agreeing on every topic, but on the capacity to discuss and consider differing points of view.

It depends on us remembering that, in the end, we share **one great cause**, and that's Australia. And that's what we **can** celebrate together.