



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

2025 AIRSHOW RECEPTION

Wednesday 26 March 2025

Acknowledgments

The Honourable Colin Brooks MP, Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing

The Honourable Kim Beazley AC, former Governor of Western Australia and Chair, Australian War Memorial

The Honourable John Brumby AO, Former Premier of Victoria

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

Secretaries, Commissioners and Senior members of State and Federal Departments

Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, and **Alyce Chipman**

Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM, Chief of Air Force, **Melissa Chappell**, and

Members of the Australian and other Defence Forces

Vice Admiral Tim Barrett AO CSC RAN (Rtd), Chair, and **Jenny Barrett**

Air Marshal Geoff Shepherd AO (Rtd), Airshow Convener, and **Members of the Board**, AMDA Foundation

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.

Just over 100 years ago, the Australian Department of Defence purchased its first military aircraft.

To train pilots, the Department acquired land in Point Cook, with the first flight scheduled for New Year's Day, 1914.

However, New Year's Day passed without a flight, and months went by with still no military aircraft taking to the skies.

The aircraft were already deteriorating, the flight instructors were out of practice, and construction of the Point Cook aerodrome was still in its early stages.

The Mail published a tongue-in-cheek poem on the whole affair:

*“Though they came out here and landed
Many, many months ago,
They’ve done nothing; to be candid,
They are sure, if they are slow,
And if we’ve got the patience just to wait,
In several years, perhaps, they’ll aviate.”*

Everything shifted with the arrival of a young Victorian, Harry Hawker, who boldly declared the aircraft ‘out of date, and practically useless for defence purposes’.

Harry was a force of nature, and a true aerophile.

Inspired by a flight demonstration at the age of 22, he ventured to England.

Working for the Sopwith Aviation Company, Hawker earned his pilot's license after only three lessons, and soon shattered the flying endurance record.

While many believed launching Australian military planes was a distant dream, Harry Hawker had other ideas.

Looking to promote aviation, he organised a demonstration for the Governor-General – who resided in this House at that time – and landed his Sopwith Tabloid right on the very lawn you passed by tonight.

Oddly enough, it wouldn't be the last plane that used these lawns as a runway.

The first airmail flight from Melbourne to Sydney also took off from these grounds – helping sow the seeds for Australia's commercial aviation market.

Although it took the pilot eight stops to make it to Sydney, the speed that air travel could bring to everyday life became readily apparent.

Australia has been referred to as suffering from a “tyranny of distance”, and back then, not only was that an external issue but also an internal one.

The growth of our commercial aviation industry helped bring Australians together like never before – allowing communities across this vast land to connect and trade with each other, regardless of distance.

The sophistication of capabilities in this sector has advanced exponentially since that time – something I can attest to following my visit to the RAAF Base in Sale last month.

Reaching this point required individuals like Hawker to push the boundaries of what's possible.

While we no longer see planes landing on the Government House lawn – innovation still requires bold ideas with the right skills to make it happen.

The pioneers of today are delivering cutting-edge research and development through our defence forces, our private sector and importantly – our higher education system.

Victorian universities are national leaders in defence innovation, with nearly half of Australia's university defence projects conducted right here.

This translates into a thriving defence industry in our State – one that supports over 20,000 workers and generates \$350 million in exports annually.

The Avalon Airshow will see hundreds of exhibitors from all facets of the industry showcase their products, services and technologies – including many from Victoria.

The exhibition stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of innovation in this sector and our State's contribution to seizing the opportunities of the future.

I hope that the 2025 Airshow allows you to strengthen partnerships with one another as you continue this proud tradition of continuous improvement.

And I know Victoria and its institutions will continue to offer our expertise as we venture into this future together.

I now invite Minister Brooks to address us.