



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

NO. 21 (CITY OF MELBOURNE) SQUADRON'S

90TH BIRTHDAY DINING IN NIGHT

Friday 1 May 2026

Acknowledgments

Air Commodore Andrew McHugh, Commander of the Combat Support Group, Royal Australian Air Force

Wing Commander Nikki Clements, Commanding Officer, **current and former members**, No 21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron

Distinguished guests

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

Though we mark a milestone of 90 years tonight, I'd like to start by looking a little further back.

On 22 May 1914, Lieutenant Eric Harrison took off in a B.E.2a biplane not far from here, in Werribee.

Heading towards Melbourne, he flew over crowds attending the arrival of the new Governor-General of Australia, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, who was en route to Government House.

It was our nation's first ever military flypast.

Reports describe how the "...swiftly rushing machine towards the earth, the nose pointed down at what seemed a dangerous angle, thrilled the crowd..." as he landed in Albert Park.

The flypast is a tradition that still delights crowds today.

And you could point to that moment as one of the earliest examples of Vice-Regal connection to the Air Force in Victoria.

The first Victorian Governor who returned to reside in Government House was Lord Huntingfield, who – upon his inauguration in 1934 – received an expanded flyover of five aircraft, as well as an Air Force guard of honour.

As you know, upon the formation of this Squadron two years later, he was appointed Honorary Air Commodore – granting the use of the horn and wings of his own coat of arms to be used in the Squadron's crest.

It is a privilege to be here tonight to continue this longstanding Vice-Regal connection.

And though it is no longer a tradition at the inauguration of a Governor – we are always pleased to witness a flypast over Government House on Australia Day.

Ceremonial engagement with members of the Australian Defence Force, on behalf of the people of Victoria, remains one of the great privileges of the role of Governor.

Yet what is equally rewarding is the opportunity to visit these bases, see your operations firsthand and hear your stories of service.

When I visited this Squadron last year, I received a briefing on the nature of your roles and how they have transformed.

The capabilities of the Air Force have clearly advanced exponentially over the past nine decades.

While the technology at your disposal is increasingly sophisticated, our defence personnel remain at the heart of these capabilities.

We will always rely on skilled people with bravery and dedication to protect the security of our nation.

And while most Victorians would be unfamiliar with the intricacies of your work, you can be assured they are aware of – and grateful for – your contributions that ensure this profound responsibility is being met.

You should be just as proud of that as you are of this significant anniversary.

As Honorary Air Commodore, I thank you for your longstanding commitment to this cause and congratulate you all on this special occasion.

Thank you.