



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **ORDER OF AUSTRALIA INVESTITURE CEREMONIES**

**Tuesday 5 May – Thursday 7 May 2026**

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.

These lands have supported countless generations, and yet our modern nation – the Commonwealth of Australia – is younger than this ballroom we gather in.

Australia found its beginning on the first day of 1901, and this Saturday will mark exactly 125 years since the first national Parliament met in the Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton.

Immortalised by Tom Roberts' famous painting 'The Big Picture,' the scene that day was described in The Argus as a gathering of:

“...free people, hopeful people, courageous people – entrusted with the working out of their own destiny, and rejoicing in their liberty.”

It was not until 1949 that Australian citizenship was officially established for the people of this land (although not all our people gained citizenship at this time).

It is just over five decades since an honours system was created to recognise their contributions.

That is what brings us here today.

Still, the anniversary of the birth of our democracy is worth reflecting on.

It was a moment of great ceremony and fanfare.

Yet the Constitution that brought this nation into being is not distinguished by its bold rhetoric.

Within it, we find no grand declaration of rights, no manifesto proclaiming our shared values as a people.

That was left for us to determine, and our national identity is still unfurling today.

It is a topic of ongoing conversation, and one that can seem difficult to define in words alone.

The readiness by some to declare what is 'un-Australian' is an impulse, turning us from what brings us together.

The best way to understand these values is not by talking about them, but rather by experiencing them.

Earlier this year, Victorians faced the perils of fire and flood, which threatened lives and livelihoods across our State.

As I have visited affected communities, the ideals that unite us as a people have been palpable to me.

I felt them when meeting with BlazeAid volunteers in Euroa, who had just returned from a day of rebuilding fences for a farmer whose hands had been burnt by the fire.

I felt them as I entered the public hall in Yarck, which had been transformed into a donation centre by residents looking to support their neighbours who had lost everything.

And I felt these values when speaking with the owners of the General Store in Wye River, who – after having their business gutted by flash flooding – awoke the next day to find people of all ages armed with shovels to dig through the layers of mud.

Perhaps due to many decades of facing such emergencies, as Australians we are particularly good at banding together during trying times.

But it would be incorrect to assume that we are only united in hardship.

They may be most visible during a crisis, but our instincts for equality and fairness do not emerge from thin air.

They thrive quietly but constantly across all sections of our society.

The contributions we have acknowledged today are testament to this fact.

We have seen people recognised for their deep commitment over many decades in their professional careers or in their volunteer service – or both.

We have seen people recognised for successfully chasing a dream to give back to their communities.

And we have seen people recognised for acts of extraordinary courage and extraordinary service.

All these recognitions go much further in expressing our shared values than words ever could.

In celebrating them through our Australian Honours System, we help ensure these instincts are nurtured and preserved for the generations to come.

There is no document prescribing us to act in this way towards one another.

No nation is perfect, yet we have reason to be proud of the society we have built together, and continue to build, within this democratic framework.

We remain free, hopeful and courageous people.

We continue to rejoice in our liberty as we work out our shared destiny.

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, we offered ourselves the promise of freedom and opportunity for all.

Today we celebrate the work of those who have done much to secure it.

Thank you.