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Speech by High Commissioner Allaster Cox

G'day by the Bay 2025

Clifford Pier, Fullerton Bay Hotel

5 February 2025

Minister Edwin Tong, our Guest of Honour tonight,

Members of Parliament

Excellencies, other Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening.

Thank you, Simone, for your introduction.

I'm delighted to welcome you all to G'day by the Bay 2025, our annual National and Lunar New Year celebration with a distinctly Singaporean flavour - especially this year for the 60th anniversary of Singapore's independence; and an auspicious 5 cycles of Australia-Singapore partnership and friendship.

I'd like again to acknowledge our esteemed Guest of Honour, Minister Edwin Tong, Singapore's Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Law and Members of Parliament Mr Don Wee and Ms Foo Mee for attending this evening.

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The close and productive partnership we enjoy with leaders like Minister Tong and the cultural, youth and sporting eco-systems in the two nations are key pillars of the Australia-Singapore relationship – and the essence of the people-to-people friendships we celebrate tonight.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, this evening, I'm excited to launch our theme and logo for 2025, 'Celebrating 60 Years of Friendship', with our 60th anniversary special artwork created by award-winning Yuen-Noongar woman and artist Jessica Begg from Western Australia [*point towards the artwork*].

Its title, 'Bunji', means 'friend' or 'mate' in several Australian Aboriginal cultures.

'Bunji' embodies the spirit of enduring friendship and collaboration between our two nations. The artwork features:

- Star constellations from the Australian and Singaporean national flags;
- Five concentric rings symbolising sacred meeting places and the creation of trusted partnerships between our peoples over 5 cycles of the Chinese zodiac;

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- Strong use of classic orchid pinks and purples – the colours of Singapore’s national flower;
- Our peoples gathering at meeting places, and;
- a snake motif on the outer edge, signifying strength, creativity, and continuity and recognising that 1965 and 2025 are years of the Wood Snake.

Together with the theme and artwork, we have a logo fitting for a 60th anniversary year. It is the result of a collaboration between Jessica Begg and Singaporean graphic designer Wilyana Widjaja.

And I must say that when looking for good friends in the foundational Year of the Snake - then as now - I couldn’t think of a better country for Singapore to partner than a neighbouring island continent particularly renowned for its snakes.

And there is no more fitting place to celebrate our coming together than here at Clifford Pier, which was a hub for Australians entering Singapore for many decades in the last century from around the time Qantas launched its first overseas flight to Singapore in 1935.

And in 1938, it switched to its regular Empire [flying boat](#) services. So, there is a long history of people meeting here.

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Just as today, people meet in the grand central Post Offices of both Sydney and Singapore at the modern Fullerton Hotels in both cities.

I wish to thank the team at the Fullerton Group for tonight's arrangements, led by General Manager Gino Tan and his team, including Australian chefs from the Fullerton in Sydney. And to my team at the Australian High Commission, who have been working for many months to create tonight's event.

I want to acknowledge our sponsors, notably our Diamond Sponsors: James Cook University, Murdoch University, Santos, the Australian International School, Curtin University, BHP, the University of Newcastle, and Westpac. Thank you all very much for your support all year this year. And to our Gold Sponsors this evening: Rio Tinto; Tourism Australia; Singtel-NCS and Austcham Singapore. The generous support demonstrated by our sponsors means we can continue to show Singapore what the best of Australia is all about.

We also couldn't do it without the ongoing support and friendship of our Team Australia partners, so I'd like to thank the Australia New Zealand Association - ANZA, AustCham – our Business Council, the Australian International School, the Australian Alumni Singapore – our peak Alumni association and Tourism Australia for collaborating closely with us – this and every year. We're proud of the fact that

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around 400,000 Singaporeans make the trip to our country each year, and this number is growing!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout the 60th anniversary, consistent with our theme, we'll be working to highlight Australia's strong people-to-people ties with Singaporeans over the decades and the potential on the road ahead.

This will perhaps be most notable through our 60 for 60 Project - which began on our social media channels in the first week of the year. We have selected 60 people -Singaporeans and Australians - who have agreed to collaborate with us both to embody and personify the story of 60 years of friendship.

As you walked in, you might have seen the face of Commodore Geoff Ledger, celebrated for his incredible role as a Navy helicopter pilot saving 13 lives following the Sentosa cable car accident of 1983.

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And Dr Kanwaljit Soin, an Orthopaedic and Hand Surgeon, and Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Dr Soin has long championed social and women's issues during her career.

Or Madame Goh Soo Khim, the first Asian student to be accepted into the Australian Ballet School in Melbourne during the early 1960's. She went on to found Singapore's first professional dance company, the Singapore Dance Theatre – now the acclaimed Singapore Ballet.

Following her Australian tertiary education, Prof Cheong Koon Hean became a prominent leader on urban development in Singapore as CEO of both the Urban Renewal Authority and the HDB, winning many professional awards. She continues to shape urban thinking today as Chair of the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at SUTD.

Or, how about Mrs Rosa Daniel, now Singapore's Ambassador to UNESCO who has been pioneering our two countries' cultural relations for decades, ensuring ongoing cooperation between us in the arts, arts management and culture.

Her efforts partnered those by Professor Mathew Trinca, formerly the Director of the National Museum in Canberra - who has spent

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decades fostering relationships in the arts, which have led to innovative and creative projects, enhancing lives in both countries.

And, Professor Dale Fisher, a renowned health professional on the front lines of COVID-19 nationally in Singapore and internationally through the World Health Organisation. Today, he is at the forefront of thinking and preparation for the world and this region's response to the next pandemic.

Through the 60 for 60 Project, we will also acknowledge the many thousands of Singapore National Service men and defence forces personnel – men and women - who have trained in our country who have formative memories and have created lasting friendships with Australians. In 2025, the Australian Federal Police will also mark 40 years of police diplomatic partnerships with Singaporean law enforcement agencies.

Only last November when I was in Australia, I was struck by the Merlion Statue which I saw just outside the terminal of the new Rockhampton Airport, a symbol of the regard and value which the people of Central Queensland feel for the many Singaporeans they meet each year near their town. And this feeling is replicated too in many other towns in Australia from Oakey and Toowoomba in Southern Queensland to Bullsbrook – the home of Pearce Airbase north of Perth.

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Throughout the year we will – with our partners – mount a number of events and activities from modern dance to theatre, film to symphonic music, sport, business and education that will celebrate active collaborations between Australians and Singaporeans – between people engaging, sharing and learning the best of what they know with each other to advance our shared interests and ideals.

It is in this connection too that we warmly welcome and look forward to the tour by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane next week – the first such tour by the SSO to Australia and an excellent counterpart to the recent Gala concerts by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and SSO here in Singapore last year.

The spirit of these activities will all come together when, later this year, our Leaders meet and announce a new decade of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The renewed Partnership will build on the step-change we made in both the depth and breadth of the relationship in the first 10 years of the CSP – 10 years of ever closer collaboration that has further strengthened the deep trust between us and grown the appetite on both sides for working ever closer together as we navigate, as Prime Minister Wong put it, “a more dangerous and turbulent world”. Together, we are setting an ambitious course for economic, energy, defence and security, health, educational, cultural and technological cooperation to 2035.

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And all of this has evolved in a wider context: our enduring partnership with the countries of ASEAN – with which we celebrated 50 years of cooperation last year. There are few other institutions of such importance to both Singapore and Australia than this. It and the friendship and habits of collaboration we have with ASEAN nations and peoples are part of the bedrock of our stability and hence prosperity.

And next year - at this event - in the light of our renewed bilateral partnership program, we'll have more to say about the road ahead: in the words of the famous Singapore National Day Parade song: “we did it before, and we'll do it again”.

Thank you to you all for sharing the evening with us tonight.

Thank you for your friendship.

Gong Xi Fa Cai!

Cheers to the next 60 years!

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