



“We are celebrating”

Address by the Australian High Commissioner

Philip Green

Australia Day in Singapore 2014

Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Health

Mr Christopher De Souza, MP

Dr Janil Puthucheary, MP

Ladies and gentlemen

Here at the Australian High Commission, we are celebrating.

On Australia Day 2014, we reflect on the things that bind Australia and Singapore together. On what we have achieved, and what we have yet to achieve. On our hopes and plans for the year ahead.

We reflect on a relationship between Australia and Singapore that is at a high point – with linkages across government, business, education and society that are in truly great shape. We celebrate that.

We are celebrating the strong links between the Governments of Australia and Singapore.

Australia’s new leaders have wasted no time in engaging with their partners in Singapore. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop visited Singapore on just her 15th day in office, and Prime Minister Abbott met formally with Prime Minister Lee within three weeks of being sworn in.

We are celebrating our links in defence and security - the deep heart-beat of our bilateral ties.

The Singapore Armed Forces and the Australian Defence Force have a special relationship - They train together. They exercise together. They work to keep us safe, together.

We are celebrating the extraordinary links in education. Since the days of the Colombo Plan, many Singaporean parents have entrusted the education of their children to Australia and its universities.

So many, in fact, that – in total - more than 100,000 Singaporeans are graduates of Australian universities.

We are celebrating a network of business linkages between Australia and Singapore – linkages that serve to make both our countries more prosperous.

Our economies are complementary and deeply engaged.

Singapore has for some time been in Australia's top five trading partners. But now Singapore is a major investment player as well.

In fact, Singapore is now the fourth largest source country, globally, for investment into Australia.

We celebrate the many Australian corporates that have established businesses here in Singapore.

There are now perhaps a thousand of them.

Among them are the great companies that are our partners tonight – VISY (Australia's great paper and packaging company, now a leader in sustainability and innovation).

As well as... the Macquarie Group, Harvey Norman, Telstra Global, TOLL Global Logistics, and the Australian International School.

We are celebrating the connections between the peoples of Australia and Singapore, which have reached a new high.

More than a million Australians travelled to Singapore last year – more than one in twenty. 350,000 Singaporeans travelled to Australia – nearly one in ten.

We celebrate the new steps that we are taking together. In particular, the New Colombo Plan, which seeks to bring many more Australians to Asia to study.

We are delighted that Singapore has warmly welcomed the Plan, and has agreed to be one of four pilot locations for the program's roll-out.

We are celebrating 40 years of cooperation with ASEAN. Way back in 1974, Australia became ASEAN's formal dialogue partner. In fact, we became ASEAN's first dialogue partner.

In a different way, we are celebrating the success of Singapore - its transformation from fragile city state to a global centre for finance and business.

That is a Singaporean achievement, but we Australians celebrate in our partners' success – part of the historic transformation going on in Asia, in which Australia seeks to play a full part.

We are celebrating that, in this year when Australia hosts the G20, Singapore will be joining as our special guest.

We look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Lee to Brisbane in November, bringing Singapore's expertise in finance and business to the G20 table.

For all these reasons, we celebrate. We want to celebrate this moment well – that's why we have brought together this tasting of Australian food, wine and other specialities. Enjoy that! Post your photo to our Instagram page. Have a ride in a Bufori car, and don't miss the Tasmanian whisky!

I thank you all for joining us in our celebration, and in particular Minister Gan for gracing our occasion with your attendance.

I now invite our friends from Lasalle College of the Arts to perform the National Anthem of Singapore, after which I will propose a toast to the President.

[The National Anthem of Singapore is sung]

Please raise your glasses and join me in a toast to His Excellency, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore, and in celebration of Australia - Singapore relations.