



Australia Day has just passed, but it remains a good time to reflect on the people and places that make our region what it is.

Across the Albury electorate, It's inspiring the way people look out for one another. Much of what strengthens our community happens quietly through volunteering, acts of kindness, and years of service that often go unrecognised.

Thank you to those who give their time, support their neighbours, and help hold our communities together. That spirit of care and connection is what truly defines our region.

Yesterday, I enjoyed spending time with the Tumbarumba and Oaklands communities, and sharing some of these reflections, which are included below.



Photo Credit: Wendy Lavis Tumbarumba Rotary

Australia Day Address – Tumbarumba

Australia Day is always a moment for reflection, but this year, that reflection feels deeper and more complex. Across our country, many people are feeling unsettled, anxious, and searching for reassurance about who we are and who we are becoming as a community.

In the aftermath of events like those at Bondi, we've seen fear, grief and anger ripple far beyond one place. Moments like these test us. They challenge our sense of safety, our trust in one another, and sometimes even our confidence in the values that bind us together.

Australia's story has never been one of ease alone. It is a story shaped by how we respond in difficult moments, by the choices we make when compassion is harder, when unity requires

effort, and when leadership is needed most.

That's why the life of Dame Marie Bashir, who passed away last week, offers such a powerful example for us today.

Dame Marie was a proud daughter of the Riverina, born in Narrandera, shaped by regional life and the strong sense of responsibility that often comes with it. She was also the daughter of Lebanese migrants is a reminder that Australia's strength has long been drawn from many cultures, stories and journeys.

As an eminent psychiatrist, Dame Marie dedicated her professional life to understanding people especially those who were vulnerable, marginalised, or struggling to be heard. And as the first female Governor of New South Wales, she brought that same humanity to public leadership.

She led not through force or division, but through listening. Through empathy. Through an unwavering belief in dignity, respect and inclusion.

At times of tension, Dame Marie urged Australians not to retreat into fear or suspicion, but to lean into our shared humanity. She reminded us that leadership is not about amplifying differences for advantage, but about finding common ground, and holding it steady.

Those lessons feel especially relevant today.

Here in Tumbarumba, we know what it means to rely on one another. Whether it's through drought, fire, flood, economic uncertainty or social change, this is a community that understands resilience not as a slogan, but as lived experience.

Community here isn't abstract. It's practical. It's the neighbour who checks in. The volunteer who turns up. The quiet contribution that doesn't make headlines but makes a difference.

Australia Day, at its best, is not about perfection, it's about responsibility. It asks each of us: *what do we contribute?* How do we help shape a community that is safe, fair, and generous in spirit?

Dame Marie Bashir showed that where you come from matters but what matters more is how you serve. That leadership can be compassionate. That strength and kindness are not opposites. And that belonging is something we build together, day by day.

As we reflect today, honestly, thoughtfully, may we carry those values forward here in Tumbarumba. In how we speak to one another. In how we support those doing it tough. And in how we choose unity over division, even when it would be easier not to.

That, I believe, is a very Australian aspiration, and a very Tumbarumba one too.

Thank you, and happy Australia Day.





Photo Credit: Wendy Lavis Tumbarumba Rotary

Australia at a Crossroads: Prosperity, Migration and Social Cohesion

Australia Day invites both gratitude and honesty. Gratitude for what we have built together, and honesty about what must change if we want to remain a prosperous, cohesive nation.

In May 2024, Paul Kelly described what he called Australia's "migration paradox". His argument deserves serious reflection, not because it questions immigration, but because it challenges complacency.

Australia's economic model, he wrote, has come to depend on high immigration, and "it is past time the flaws in this system were confronted." Immigration, once a contributor to productivity and national capability, has increasingly substituted for productivity growth itself. The result is economic expansion but not rising prosperity per person.

This matters because economic growth per capita is the real test of success. It is what lifts living standards. It is what allows governments to fund health, education and support for the vulnerable — not by taking a larger slice of the pie, but by growing a bigger one.

Australia remains a remarkably tolerant and successful multicultural nation. But as Kelly warned, tolerance is not limitless. Weak income growth, high population growth and rising identity politics are a combustible mix. Other Western nations show us where that road can lead if social cohesion is taken for granted.

That is why Australia now stands at a crossroads.

Decoupling growth from the migration paradox

The task ahead is not to retreat from immigration, but to decouple economic growth from population growth.

Immigration must once again be a complement to productivity, not a substitute for it. Intake levels must be sustainable, aligned with housing supply, infrastructure capacity and genuine skills needs. This is not anti-migration; it is pro-prosperity and pro-cohesion.

At the same time, we should unapologetically reaffirm what has made multicultural Australia work. To understand the privilege of coming here. To embrace Australia, its values, its laws and its democratic institutions. That compact matters.

We are one nation governed by one law, and equality before that law is essential to social cohesion.

Growing our own skills

A sustainable migration system also requires honesty about our domestic failures. Both the VET and university reviews have confirmed what many Australians already know: too many people are being left without skills, without pathways, and without dignity in work.

We cannot rely indefinitely on importing labour while neglecting the potential of our own people. Skills policy is nation-building policy.

Yet in New South Wales, apprenticeship commencements are falling. That should concern anyone serious about productivity, opportunity and social mobility. Growing our own skills is not optional, it is essential.

Confidence, not fear

Australia Day should never be about fear or division. It should be about confidence, confidence that we can learn, adapt and reform without losing who we are.

We have much to be grateful for. We are one of the world's most successful migrant societies. But success today does not guarantee success tomorrow.

If we confront the migration paradox honestly, rebuild productivity, invest in skills and reaffirm our shared national values, Australia's best days are not behind us, they are ahead of us.



Congratulations!

Mr Maxwell Luff OAM

Mr Jim Saleeba OAM

Mr Tom Moss OAM

Chief Inspector Scott Russell APM

**Albury Electorate residents receiving 2026 Australia Day
Honours for outstanding contributions to country and
community.**

Australia Day Honours

Sincere congratulations to all recipients of local council Australia Day awards, people whose commitment and contribution continue to strengthen our communities.

Snowy Valleys Council

Citizen of the Year: Shane Walsh

Young Citizen of the Year: Georgie Austen

Senior Citizen of the Year: Max Hargreaves

Sportsperson of the Year: Will Crawford.

Environmental Award: Khancoban Landcare Group, Khancoban

Arts and Culture Award: Edwina (Fanny) Lumsden, Tooma

Federation Council

Citizen of the Year: Kelvin (Kel) Kuhne

Young Citizen of the Year: Cooper Holman

Local Hero Award – Community Group: Corowa Lions Club

Local Hero Award – Mark Sutcliffe, Anne Westcott, John Crothers

Local Hero Award – Sports: Zachary Kerr

Special Judges Award – Inspirational Young Person: Isabel Carroll

Albury City Council

Citizen of the Year: Dr John Stuchbery

Senior Citizen of the Year: Dr John Brabant

Young Citizen of the Year: Olivia Britton

Community Group of the Year: Albury Wodonga FoodShare

Active Citizen of the Year: Heather Cahill

Creative Citizen of the Year: Tony Smith

Environmental Citizen of the Year: John Shepherd

Volunteers of the Year: Colleen Bryan, Helen Whittaker

Mayor's Award: Paul Gibbs

Greater Hume Council

Citizen of the year: Alan Odewahn

Sportsperson of the year: Hamish Mackinlay

Sports volunteer of the year: Geoffrey Whitty

Volunteers of the year: Rita Bowler and Julia Martin

Volunteer group of the year: Jindera Pioneer Museum

Young citizen of the year: Lilysh Retallick

Community Event of the Year: Burrumbuttock 150 yr celebrations