

**Territory Day Citizenship Ceremony**  
**Speech delivered by Chief Minister Michael Gunner**  
**Parliament House, Darwin, 1 July 2018**

*Check against delivery*

Long before today ... long before self-government ... long before the first drover, miner, settler or sailor pitched their first tent in this spectacular corner of the world, the Larrakia People were here.

They've danced here ... sung here ... hunted here ... raised their families here ... loved here, for tens of thousands of years.

They will do so for tens of thousands years more. And I pay my respects to the Larrakia and to all First Nations people on their ancestral lands.

I welcome and acknowledge the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Vicki O'Halloran.

I welcome members of my team.

All our many distinguished guests.

Most of all, welcome to our soon-to-be newest Australian citizens.

I would say our newest Territorians.

But, for me, the moment you fall in love with the Territory is the moment you become a Territorian.

And I suspect, judging by the fact this is where you've chosen to make home ... by the fact you are here to become Australian citizens on this special Northern Territory birthday ... and judging by your smiles in this perfect Dry Season sunshine, you are all already long-term Territorians.

Welcome to this morning's ceremony.

Welcome and thank you.

In a few moments' time, after the pledges, oaths and words, Australia will be stronger by a measure of 62.

Because 62 people with their birth-nation's languages, foods, arts, dances, sports, traditions and wit.

62 people with their unique gifts, skills and knowledge.

62 people bearing brand new certificates, new rights, and invitations to contribute.

Is this nation getting 62 new precious assets.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for choosing the Northern Territory.

You are choosing to be part of something special.

This day 40 years ago we were granted self-government – the first Territory Day.

The first Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, was just 35 years old. 35 years old. Most of his colleagues were about the same age.

Our greatest Territory businesses – Paspaley, Halikos, Sitzler – began with little more than two hands and a dream.

And now fast forward to today's Chief Minister. He's a little older than 35, sure, but he's always a public housing kid from Tennant Creek.

The Territory has always been Australia's place of opportunity.

The Territory has always been a place to get ahead if you put your hand up and your head down.

It is an exciting place and it's only going to get more exciting.

We are half the time – by air and sea – to the great centres of Asia than from other Australian cities.

If you want to see how Darwin and the Northern Territory will figure in this Asian Century, you only need to look at a map.

Northern Australia, including the top of WA and QLD, account for more than half this country's exports with only about 5 per cent of the population.

Just imagine what we're going to do with more people. More investment. More dreamers and entrepreneurs. More of you.

Thank you for choosing the Territory. Though even putting our opportunity aside for one moment, it's not exactly hard to understand such a choice.

Did you know in Melbourne today it's only getting to 14 degrees? Sydney, 15 degrees?

I love our Dry. I also love our Wet.

I love breathing tropical air. I love the lightning and thunder rolling in from Palmerston.

I love the sunsets, any time of the year. The fishing, even just down here right behind me we watched a bloke reel in a barramundi the other day.

I love the landscapes at our doorstep.

It's the markets. The amazing food. Our clubs and sporting teams. Our sense of community.

I love our incredible 65000 year history of Aboriginal, Asian and European migration.

This city's emergence from war and cyclone ... from frontier back-water to the Economic and Cultural capital of the North - Australia's gateway to Asia, and Asia's gateway to Australia.

It's not just our geography. It's our people. Our friendships across cultures. Our blood ties across oceans. These ties go back centuries, long before the first Europeans.

The Prime Minister often calls Australia the most successful multi-cultural nation on earth. And I think if this is true, then Darwin must be the most successful multi-cultural city on earth.

We've long been a melting pot of cultures.

The Chinese built the railroads and pioneered the gold industry in the Top End, so that in the late 1800s they outnumbered Europeans here by 7:1.

Japanese Pearl Divers were 71 per cent of Darwin's male population in the 1920s.

The Greeks have built much of our skyline. Today we're enriched by our Filipinos, Indians, Thais, Europeans, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Africans, Kiwis, South Americans, West Indians and people from just about every end of the earth.

It wasn't always a harmonious co-existence in the early days, but the kids of our pioneers ... and then their kids ... and their kids and their kids... grew up with, around and as part of other cultures, so that multi-culturalism is a way of life ...

... as natural to our kids now as a birthday

... as natural as getting up in the morning

... as natural as the sun setting over this beautiful harbour.

Ladies and gentlemen, 41 years ago, six months before self-government, Vietnamese refugees fleeing war floated into that harbour on an old wooden fishing boat.

Among them was a 21-year-old man. He tells the story of how he and his companions, having been pushed away six times by the coastguards of other nations, came upon this blue water behind me.

Scared, and assuming they would again be turned away or arrested, they came across their first Australians.

That young Vietnamese man recalled many years later, and I quote:

"I think they had some zinc on their nose and a can of beer in their hands.

"When they came close to us they waved at us and one of them shouted at us 'G'day mate. Welcome to Australia' and they passed on and left us."

You can read that story most anywhere because that 21-year-old was Hieu Van Le.

In 2014 he became the Governor of South Australia.

That's Australia.

Today nearly a third of Territorians were born overseas, more than the Australian average.

Others, like me, are fourth generation Australian. Others, like our Larrakia brothers and sisters, are 1000<sup>th</sup> generation.

First, fourth, 1000<sup>th</sup>.

We're all proud Territorians. Long-term, proud Territorians. And from today, we're all proud Australians.

Congratulations. And I look forward to working for you and with you so we all take our opportunities.