



**EMBAJADA DE AUSTRALIA
BUENOS AIRES**

Buenos Aires, 26 January 2021

Every 26 January, Australians take the opportunity to celebrate our country and our society. On Australia Day in 2020, many Australians were affected by the worst bushfires in our history, but for all the devastation they caused they showed to the world the best of Australians, including our resilience and determination in the face of adversity.

Only a year later, the resolve of Australians is again being tested, this time by the pandemic. To bring this dreadful virus under control, Australians have endured enormous hardship. They have sacrificed personal liberties and freedoms for the greater good of the country. 900 Australians have lost their lives. This is too many, but if it were not for the determination of all Australians and the dedication and commitment of our health professionals and other frontline workers, the situation might have been so much worse.

There are many Australians still attempting to return home from overseas, and they are frustrated as Australia balances their desire to be reunited with friends and family against the ongoing battle against the pandemic. No amount of comforting words from me can hope to alleviate the genuine distress among those currently unable to return home. All I can do is to promise that my team at the Embassy, like teams in embassies all over the world, will continue to do our best to help. As Australians always do, we will get through this.

While the pandemic will certainly impact upon the way in which many Australians are able to commemorate our National Day, some aspects do not change. It is a day to reflect on the overwhelming successes of our unique multicultural society, while reminding ourselves that we are by no means perfect. We must continue to address our problems directly, including the discrimination faced by the first Australians, whose culture has endured for 60,000 years, if we are to truly move forward as a diverse but united people.

We must also rise to the challenges of an increasingly complicated world. We believe that our national values, including a commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, are truly worth defending, and as a result Australia will continue to be a positive voice in global affairs. Sometimes others will disagree with us, and that is understandable, but as a people we know the good for which we stand and should never apologise for that.

Last year I expressed the hope that 2020 would be a successful year for all of us, Australians and non-Australians alike. Perhaps this year it might be wiser to wish people continued health and safety, and to look forward to a return to a normal life as soon as possible. I am optimistic that we can achieve this, because optimism runs through the blood of all Australians.

I am proud to represent such a country and such a people.

Happy Australia Day!

With best wishes

Brett Hackett