

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
LAUNCH OF BLOOD BROTHERS
SANDAKAN
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I feel enormously privileged to join you here on Sandakan Day as we launch Blood Brothers, Lynette Silver's history of Sabah from the earliest days of colonisation through World War Two and beyond.

One cannot discuss the Australian experience of the Second World War without mention of our prisoners of war in South-East Asia.

The brutal conditions, the forced labour, the torture, interrogation and death.

And Australians' courage and sacrifice in the face of it all, sustained over years.

The story of the Sandakan POW Camp, and its devastating cost to human life and dignity, captures the essence of this experience, perhaps like none other.

And for a long time, it has been the only story Australians have known of what happened here in Sabah during the years 1942 to 1945.

Blood Brothers takes us back to those years and turns our attention to the people of Sabah who, as pawns in coveted territory, endured horrific violence and destruction, and loss of life, livelihood and community, at the merciless hands of the occupying forces.

Through more than a decade of incisive questioning and research, Mrs Silver gently and thoughtfully prepared the groundwork for this important local chapter she has called Blood Brothers - a progression from and vital complement to her earlier seminal work, Sandakan: A Conspiracy of Silence.

This new work details, in a way we've never read before,

rural and community life in Sabah,
the Sabahans' brave and ingenious resistance of enemy occupation,
and the persecution of the Chinese community.

It deepens our knowledge:

of how the locals worked alongside Australians in the underground intelligence and supply networks,
how they secretly fed our men,
how they fought and died with us and for us.

The dedicated work of Lynette Silver and all those who have helped and encouraged her will shed light and meaning on the passage of events in Sabah in those three critical years in the early 1940s.

Among us here today are those with a personal connection, relatives of men and women lost - Australians and Malaysians - families yearning to understand what their loved ones and forebears saw and suffered.

We know the names of the Sandakan survivors but many of us have not known the names of the Sabahans who courageously supported the escapees from the camps and marches.

Blood Brothers will teach us some of those names - the Funk brothers, Domima, Kaingal, Kulang and so many others.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a much anticipated book.

It will answer countless questions that have dwelt heavily upon the hearts and minds of Australians and British.

And it will release to the world a story whose burden the Sabahans have long carried alone.

To Lynette Silver, I express my greatest praise and admiration for your efforts.

And to the people of Sabah, I convey the gratitude and warmth of the Australian people for your abiding honesty, generosity, wisdom and friendship.

Friends, I give you Blood Brothers.