

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**BRAVERY COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE**  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA  
16 FEBRUARY 2008

It is a great pleasure for Marlena and me to host this Service of Remembrance.

This is a beautiful garden, reflecting the inspirational nature of bravery.

It provides a serene setting to contemplate and commemorate the actions of brave Australians &mdash; both those whose bravery has been recorded, and those whose acts of bravery remain unknown, but not unappreciated.

When former Governor-General Sir William Deane saw the potential of this garden area he must also have foreseen the wonderful symbolism it would create. From a collection of nondescript shrubs, surrounded by cyclone fencing and muddy pools of water, we now have this simple, dignified place of remembrance.

As surely as any grand monument, this modest and serene area perpetuates, in a most enduring way, a nation's respect and gratitude for the brave actions of Australians from all walks of life.

The positioning of each stone with its message plaques replicates the Southern Cross, and in so doing establishes the link with our great south land and the values that we Australians hold dear.

Today is an occasion when we honour those whose heroic and selfless actions and quick thinking saved the lives of others.

Bravery is conduct in which a person puts themselves in very real, physical danger in order to protect a person, property or the environment.

Our recent awardees join a distinguished and growing group of Australians.

Since 1975, there have been 5 awards of the Cross of Valour; 132 awards of the Star of Courage; 898 awards of the Bravery Medal; 1,342 Commendations for Brave Conduct and 62 awards of the Group Bravery Citation.

Some of these awards have been given posthumously, to those who made the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives.

In honouring so many brave Australians, we must recognise that an act of bravery can come at a price, whether psychological or physical, and this may also impact on family and friends.

This is why the work of the Australian Bravery Association is so important, with its aim: 'To maximise the support available to those members in our community who conduct themselves bravely to save life, property or the environment and thereby experience physical, emotional or other personal hardship'.

I especially commend the Association for introducing the 'Guardians of the Brave' initiative, where you

are partnering with the police and emergency services chaplains across Australia and Rotary to provide additional support to brave Australians in need.

The requirement for this is reflected in research recently conducted by Bond University and supported by the Association finding that almost one in three of the 79 bravery award recipients contacted had experienced symptoms consistent with Acute Stress Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Thus, I encourage the Association to continue to explore the possibilities of establishing an Australian Bravery Foundation, perhaps modelled on the lines of the very successful Special Air Service Regiment Resources Trust.

These new initiatives are occurring in addition to your ongoing work supporting members and their families in times of need.

Congratulations and thank you to all involved.

May I also take this opportunity to thank the members of the RMC band and Mr Colin Slater and members of the Sing Australia Choir - all longstanding friends of Government House &mdash; for being present this morning.

Finally, Marlana and I would like to express our delight in seeing so many recipients here today with families and friends, including many who have travelled long distances.

We hope that each of you, in your own way, will take away something special, including perhaps friendships begun or renewed here, through your presence at this very special service.

Thank you.