

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**RECEPTION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GLOBAL FOUNDATION**  
ADMIRALTY HOUSE, SYDNEY  
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May I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today; their wisdom, enduring history and culture.

As Patron-in-Chief of the Australian Global Foundation, it is a great pleasure for Marlena and me to welcome you here this evening. I have greatly enjoyed my association with Global and congratulate David, Steve and all involved for the contribution it makes to higher level strategic thinking in this country.

In this room, we have some of the keenest minds this nation can offer, as well as some of the most astute business people and outstanding and experienced leaders; all further linked, I would suggest, by a great love of our country.

The Australia Unlimited 2008 initiative offers the opportunity to put this marvellous experience, expertise and insightful capacity to work for the betterment of our nation and her people. It is appropriate that you have integrated the involvement of citizens and stakeholders to ensure the Program remains connected to the people it supports and relevant and representative of the population's concerns.

The focus of Australia Unlimited 2008 on our global connectedness and global preparedness is timely.

And if I had to make an educated guess as to the top 10 issues requiring global preparedness and by extrapolation national preparedness too, I would list them as follows:

1. Energy
2. Water
3. Food
4. Environment / global warming
5. Poverty
6. Terrorism and War
7. Disease
8. Education
9. Democracy; and
10. Population.

We should note that three of the top four - water, food and environment - are inevitably linked to the availability of energy - one of the major themes of Australia Unlimited 2008.

A simple question. If the globe is going to run out of oil within the next 30-50 years, what fuel source will drive the world's ships and aeroplanes?

Maybe Australia should be re-thinking the technology to develop our 29 billion barrels of oil shale as our strategic transport fuel reserve, pending the development of other alternatives.

We should be very concerned with the suggestion that as a planet of 6 billion people we are already consuming around 20 percent more resources than our globe can sustain.

So what will be the social and security impact on us all when our population is of the order of 8 10 billion by 2050? Serious, I would think.

Marlena and I recently visited several Middle East countries on official business.

One of the highlights was to see the planning headquarters for the Masdar City project in Abu Dhabi which is intended to be the world's first zero-carbon, zero-waste city fully powered by renewable energy.

With seed funding of US\$15 billion, it is expected to eventually house 30-40,000 environmental engineers, scientists and their families and set the scene for how urban societies might live in future harmony with our environment.

I was also able to visit a number of world class scientific establishments in Israel to hear about their initiatives to address the common challenges Israel and Australia face in semi-arid area farming, water issues and climate change, and to encourage further joint collaboration between our countries.

The scientists at the Weizmann Institute are working on renewable energy including hydrogen, biomass, solar and fuel cell technologies.

Their very strong view was that notwithstanding any improvements we might see in coal and clean coal technologies, solar energy offers us the best prospect as a large scale, sustainable energy source.

There is much Australia can learn from these Israeli initiatives and I am keen to encourage further joint collaboration on these critical matters between our nations.

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting a wave energy facility near Perth which employs a brilliant technology that uses wave energy to push a series of salt water filled rubber balls, each attached to a rod that compresses sea water in a cylinder at high pressure, which then drives a turbine to produce electricity.

As part of that process the high pressure seawater can be passed through a fine membrane filter to produce fresh water.

Not to mention Perth's desalination plant; the third largest in the world, being powered entirely by wind. Incredible science, incredible engineering and it is happening here in this country.

Ladies and gentlemen

Our ongoing prosperity as a nation brings with it a responsibility to ensure that no group in our society is left behind how we care for the least privileged will always be an important measure of our maturity and decency as a community.

Of particular concern to me is the catastrophic number of family break-ups in our country.

Over one million children now live with a single parent, mostly mum, many of whom are doing it hard. We must find ways of better preparing young people for relationships to try and reduce the rate of marital and de-facto breakdown.

We should also recognise that much of our success and our ability to innovate and improve comes from those who have trod the path before us.

We can learn particularly from the wisdom of our indigenous people and their ability over some 60,000 years to live in harmony and sustainably in this land.

Hence my desire to see the way we teach Australian history re-vamped so that it is taught from 60 millennia back rather than from 1788.

Australia and her people are blessed with huge assets, including a strong economy, plentiful natural resources and a skilled and flexible workforce - assets we can use to further benefit all Australians and the region in which we live.

No-one should be in any doubt that we are at an important threshold in terms of the challenges and opportunities this country faces.

And that what we achieve as a nation over the next decade will have far reaching consequences for Australia's long-term future.

Innovation, excellence and leadership are critical if we are to continue to move forward positively and effectively as a nation and I know these attributes will be very much a part of the continuing deliberations of Australia Unlimited 2008.

Marlena and I wish you every success with this exciting project and I commend the Australian Global Foundation for its foresight and initiative in planning and carrying out this timely and useful process of preparing for the nation's future.

Thank you.