

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
ORDER OF AUSTRALIA INVESTITURE CEREMONY FOR SPECIAL AIR SERVICE
REGIMENT
CAMPBELL BARRACKS SWANBOURNE, WA
26 JUNE 2008

Marlena and I are delighted to be here for this afternoon's special occasion.

One of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of being Governor-General is having the opportunity to meet diverse and splendid groups of citizens - each with their own aspirations, motivations and ideals.

Today, we meet one such group of Australians in order to recognise their magnificent achievements and contributions to our nation.

It is 33 years since the Australian honours system was introduced.

In that relatively short period it has achieved genuinely national recognition as the formal means by which Australians, who perform outstandingly in a diverse range of endeavours that enrich our way of life, are appropriately recognised.

At the core of our honours system is its capacity to unify, by embracing and rewarding the efforts of citizens from all walks of life regardless of political, religious, cultural, educational or economic background.

Recipients are invariably role models whose selflessness and ability can inspire all of us to give of ourselves for the greater community good.

We should be proud of the independence of the Australian honours system.

It is held in the highest regard by many other countries - including those that seek to emulate and model their own honours systems on ours, whether they are newly created systems or those that may have been in operation for centuries.

Ladies and gentlemen.

We are here today to honour members of the Special Air Service Regiment involved in operations at home and overseas, for their military professionalism, and in some cases for their courage under fire.

These recipients are part of a very special arm of our defence force.

The Regiment deploy in circumstances and roles somewhat different to the mainstream army, where its soldiers are sometimes referred to as 'the ghosts' or 'the silent infiltrators'.

Although shunning publicity, they are nevertheless elite in fulfilling their specialist functions of reconnaissance, surveillance and countering terrorism.

They also have a proud tradition of involvement in peacekeeping operations and close protection duties.

The role of the SAS demands a particular type of soldier with outstanding personal qualities, including initiative, self discipline, independence of mind, ability to work without supervision, stamina, patience and a sense of humour.

We are indeed privileged to meet some of them today, and, as a very proud Honorary Colonel of the Regiment, it is a real pleasure for me to be able to recognise and thank them publicly for their superior contribution in making our country, and indeed the planet, a better and safer place in which to live.

Your families, who in many cases have played major supporting roles in your success - along with your friends, colleagues and the people of Australia - are rightly very proud of you and your achievements.

Marlena and I, and all present here today congratulate you, and wish you all the very best for the future.

And finally, as I near the end of my term as Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force, may I say what an extraordinary privilege and honour it has been to be associated with this Regiment, the Australian Army, and indeed the ADF for a period of more than fifty years.

Many of my proudest and happiest occasions have been in being so closely associated with the SAS; men of ability and commitment, whose service to our nation has been exemplary, and typified through the example of our recipients this morning.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a final round of acclamation to our recipients.

Thank you.