Speech

Address By

Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

On the occasion of

Opening of the New Chancery for the Australian Mission to the EU and NATO and Embassy to Belgium and Luxembourg

Brussels, Belgium
5 June 2013

Your Excellency,
Ambassador Duncan Lewis

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Nearly one hundred years ago, young Australians came to Belgium in their thousands.

Some were driven by the spirit of adventure; others by a sense of duty.

But all came to serve in the Great War – and far too many would never return.

While the First World War shaped Australia as a nation, it also forged a strong and enduring relationship with the people and Kingdom of Belgium.

The foundations of our relationship – a shared respect for the rule of law, human rights and democracy – remain as sturdy today as they were one hundred years ago.

They are the same as those on which European leaders built the European Community, that our country recognised fifty-one years ago.

These values continue to underwrite our cooperation with NATO, in particular in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the post-2014 transition and guide our cooperation with Luxembourg as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council today.

Australia has had a diplomatic office in Brussels since at least 1959.

In that time we have seen tremendous changes in Europe and Australia.

Our relationships have also evolved.

Australia and the EU, for example, are broadening the fields of our cooperation through the negotiation of a Framework Agreement, and agreements on crisis management, development assistance and emissions trading.

Australia recognises that these are not easy times for Europe, but we are confident that Europe will continue to take the decisions needed to restore its future.
In this regard, this new Australian Embassy to Belgium and Luxembourg, and Mission to the European Union and NATO, is as much a reflection of Australia’s continuing commitment to Europe, our shared values and common purposes, as it is a reflection of the modern, sophisticated and diverse nation that it and its staff serve.

It therefore gives me great pleasure, ladies and gentlemen, to open officially the Embassy of Australia in Brussels.

Mr Ambassador, I want to thank you and your staff for your work in assuring that our time here has been enriching and rewarding.

I admire and respect your distinguished service to our country. You have given for many years as has Jenny. Thank you.