



Canberra

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

H.E. Ma. Hellen B. De La Vega, Philippine Ambassador to Australia

Nobody celebrates Christmas like Filipinos and this important occasion surely draws all of us together, year after year, to share our Christmas traditions within our respective communities in Australia.

The most important element of our celebrations is the Filipino Christmas spirit which highlights what the Filipino Community is known for here in Australia – **a caring community that provides support for and lifts others particularly in times of need.**

The Filipino style of celebrating Christmas is deeply rooted in our values and traditions. It is about families coming together, reconciliation, and the gift of sharing. It is about the spirit of hope and finding joy and contentment. These values form the foundation of every Filipino family and our sense of community.

Recently here in Australia, many have been affected by the continuing bush fires. In the Philippines, we are also confronted by natural calamities – the latest of which is the earthquake that struck Davao Del Sur. I hope the Filipino community will, in your own way, support those most in need and keep them in your prayers.

I have been going around the major cities around Australia in the past year and I am humbled by the kind words that I hear from federal and state officials and the private sector about the Filipino community in Australia. Our Filipino traits of industriousness, professionalism, and kindheartedness are highly regarded. *Ipagpatuloy po natin ipakita ang galing at kabutihan ng mga Pilipino at ating pagiging responsableng mamamayan ng Pilipinas at ng Australia.*

The Philippines has shown to the world that it has so much to offer. The Philippine economy continues to demonstrate positive growth and resilience, in the midst of global economic headwinds. Our government has instituted significant policy and infrastructure reforms for business to thrive and to bring quality of life to all. Now is the time to invest in the Philippines and share in our growth story.

Next year, we will be continuing to undertake more groundwork as we prepare for the 75th anniversary of Philippines-Australia relations in 2021 where we will showcase how much the friendship between our two countries has grown, including in the key areas of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Defence and Counter-Terrorism, Immigration, Employment, and Industry, Science and Innovation, among others.

Beginning this month, we will also be commencing the registration for the Presidential elections in 2022. This year, Filipinos in Australia were recognized for having the second highest voter turn-out for the 2019 mid-term elections among the overseas Filipinos in various countries around the world. This is a demonstration that our countrymen

here in Australia continue to be responsible citizens of the Philippines. Your voice matters so please register and exercise your right and duty to vote.

Let me end by thanking everyone for your active and enduring support in promoting the welfare of kababayans here in Australia and in further enhancing the close relations between our two countries.

Maraming maraming salamat po at Maligayang Pasko sa inyong lahat!

18 December 2019