



*Canberra*

**M E S S A G E**

I join all our *kababayan* in the different parts of Australia as you commemorate the 121<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the declaration of Independence of the Philippines.

The theme for this year's Independence Day celebration is ***Kalayaan 2019: Tapang ng Bayan, Malasakit sa Mamamayan*** (Courage of the Nation, Compassion for the People). The heroes of the Philippine revolution fought with their blood and sacrificed a great deal so that we as Filipinos, will live as a people, sovereign and dignified. Once again, our country is calling on us to take courage and stand to uphold the values and principles of democracy that define us as a people.

The Philippines recently held national elections and I laud all Filipino citizens in Australia who exercised their right and duty to vote. Suffrage is a hallmark of a free and vibrant society and by faithfully participating in our elections, you honor the sacrifices of our heroes, help advance our democratic institutions and in a very concrete way, manifest your continued compassion for many of your countrymen. Elections give us the opportunity to demonstrate our courage as we stand for the people whom we believe will prioritize the welfare of the most disadvantaged and who will lead our country with the future in mind.

At 300,000 strong, the Filipino-Australian community is a source of pride for the Philippines. Your success speaks of the excellence and resilience of the global Filipino. I urge you to continue being engaged in the developments in the Philippines and be actively involved in the political and socio-economic affairs of Australia.

I take this opportunity to thank all Filipinos in Australia for organizing activities that celebrate the Philippines and your being Filipinos. As we approach the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations of the Philippines and Australia in 2021, it is my hope that the unity and camaraderie of the Filipino community will give rise to more meaningful and high impact initiatives.

***Mabuhay ang pambansang kasarinlan! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!***

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Hellen B. de la Vega'.

**MA. HELLEN B. DE LA VEGA**  
Ambassador

12 June 2019, Canberra