

# PRESS RELEASE



## *Philippine Embassy, Canberra*

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### **Philippine Embassy in Canberra Hosts the 119<sup>th</sup> Philippine Independence Day Diplomatic Reception and *Habol Ilonggo: A Heritage of Traditional Weaving***

Canberra – The Philippine Embassy in Canberra, together with the Department of Tourism (DOT), Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) and Philippine Airlines (PAL), celebrated the 119<sup>th</sup> Philippine Independence Day on 19 June 2017 at the Hyatt Hotel Canberra with a Diplomatic Reception, followed by a cultural event, entitled *Habol Ilonggo: A Heritage of Traditional Weaving*.

The official program commenced with the exchange of toasts by H.E. Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Philippine Ambassador, and Ms. Lyndall Sachs, DFAT Chief of Protocol, and by the singing of the national anthems. This was followed by the Independence Day speech of Ambassador Calaguian-Cruz who shared that the theme for this year's Independence Day, "*Pagbabagong Sama-samang Balikatin*," or generally translated as change achieved through cooperative effort, is a testament to the beauty of the Filipino language which succinctly captures the three major ideals of change, cooperation and sacrifice that marked the struggle of Filipinos for independence 119 years ago. To this day, these ideals continue to inspire Filipinos at home and overseas to contribute to nation-building. The Ambassador underscored that in Australia, over 300,000 Filipinos who now call this country their second home, also pay tribute to their forebears by helping enrich the socio-cultural fibre of Australia with their talents, artistry and collaboration.

The Ambassador also highlighted the continued strong economic performance of the Philippine economy and the President's vision to create an even stronger economy by investing in people's education and health, infrastructure spending, tax reform, and agricultural productivity, among others.

Following the Ambassador's speech were remarks from the Honorable Don Farrell, Senator for South Australia, Mr. Sam Heine, National Sales Manager, Philippine Airlines, and Ms. Norjamin Delos Reyes, Tourism Attaché.

In a tribute to the rich weaving heritage of the Philippines, the Embassy staged *Habol Ilonggo* in order to showcase the potentials of the struggling weaving industry amidst cheaper textiles, decline in the supply of natural fibers and other materials, and the lack of opportunities for growth. It is recalled that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Iloilo was known as the Textile Capital of the Philippines, with handloom textiles as its top export. *Habol* is the Hiligaynon (regional language of Western Visayas language) word for the weaving process itself.

For the love of Iloilo, four Ilonggo designers PJ Arañador, John Montinola, Sidney Ecula and Jun-G Candelario donated their time and material resources, together with international models Rachel Santillan and Ria Bolivar, and handloom weaver Constanca Fagarita Atijon, for the *Habol Ilonggo* event, which was coordinated by the Philippine Embassy and DOT with Mr. Gilbert Marin, Iloilo Provincial Tourism Director. The *Habol Ilonggo* team were joined by Mr. Alberto Barros, an Ilonggo guest designer based Sydney, and Mr. Albert Prias, a Filipino Community leader from Sydney, who helped direct and coordinate the fashion event in Canberra.

The event was attended by around 200 guests from the diplomatic corps, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), other Australian government agencies, academe, media and the Filipino community in Canberra. END



H.E. Minda Calaguian-Cruz, Philippine Ambassador, and Ms. Lyndall Sachs, Chief of Protocol, DFAT during the singing of the Philippine National Anthem



(Left to right) Remarks by the Honorable Don Farrell, Senator for South Australia, Mr. Sam Heine, National Sales Manager, Philippine Airlines, Official Carrier and Major Sponsor, Ms. Norjamin Delos Reyes, Tourism Attaché



Ms. Atijon weaving on a 1960s wooden handloom



Hablon and Patadyong Designs by PJ Arañador



( Left to Right ) Design by John Montinola featuring Iloilo's Kahirup style in 1920's vintage beading, parade of models and design by Sidney Ecolla inspired by the Iloilo's heritage architectural details.



Filipiniana wedding gown by Jun-g Candelario with exquisite appliques of classical arabesques and romantic flowers.



Ambassador Minda Calaguian-Cruz with the Habol Ilonggo team and the models from Canberra and Sydney