



Canberra

M E S S A G E

I join all our *kababayan* across Australia in celebrating the 123rd anniversary of the declaration of the Independence of the Philippines. This year is particularly special as we also commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations of the Philippines and Australia.

The theme of this year's Independence Day is ***“Kalayaan 2021: Diwa ng Kalayaan sa Pagkakaisa at Paghilom ng Bayan”*** (Spirit of Freedom in Unity and National Healing). On this important occasion, I invite our community to revisit both the hardships and triumphs that our forefathers faced as they fought for freedom and sovereignty. We continue to face the social and economic upheaval as a result of the pandemic. As our national heroes fought with fortitude, faith and unity then, may we be emboldened today by these same virtues and work tirelessly to lead our country towards recovery and prosperity.

The success of the Filipino-Australian community speaks highly of the ‘mateship and *bayanihan*’ that brought Filipinos and Australians together from the trenches of war to the frontlines of the pandemic. I congratulate Filipinos in Australia on your significant contributions in building the friendship of the Philippines and Australia. The Filipino-Australian community is the fifth largest migrant community in Australia and it is my hope that you will continue to aspire for excellence and unity of purpose and inspire future generations to proudly and consistently represent their unique heritage.

As we welcome a new chapter in our bilateral relations, I urge all our *kababayan* to be forward-looking, inclusive and innovative and support a strategic and dynamic Philippines-Australia partnership.

Mabuhay ang pambansang kasarinlan! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

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

MA. HELLEN B. DE LA VEGA

Ambassador

12 June 2021, Canberra