

# AUSTRALIA DAY

**Thursday, 14 January 2021**

## **FORMER RFS COMMISSIONER SHANE FITZSIMMONS TO DELIVER NATIONAL AUSTRALIA DAY 2021 ADDRESS**

Former Rural Fire Service (RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons AFSM will deliver the 2021 Australia Day Address, the NSW Government and Australia Day Council of NSW has announced.

Marking its 25th year, the Australia Day Address offers a prominent Australian the opportunity to speak on matters they consider to be of national importance.

Mr Fitzsimmons, the 2021 NSW Australian of the Year, was affectionally nicknamed the 'Nation's Father' for his extraordinary leadership and compassion through the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires. As Commissioner of the NSW RFS, he led the state through the unprecedented bushfire period and became one of Australia's most respected fire chiefs. He has since taken up the role as Commissioner of Resilience NSW, the lead disaster management agency for NSW.

"Shane has shown many times through his illustrious career what a compassionate and respected leader he is," Australia Day Council of NSW Chair Andrew Parker said.

"Shane stands out as someone who is authentic, someone prepared to work tirelessly for the community. He has stood alongside people from all corners of our state - in extremely challenging times. He has heard and acted on stories, problems, fears and hopes.

"He captured the hearts of NSW communities by simply being a man of the people and someone we want to listen to. I look forward to hearing his Address on January 18," Mr Parker said.

Mr Fitzsimmons said it is an honour to be invited to deliver the Australia Day Address and to be given the platform to share his vision for Australia with the whole nation.

Beginning his career as a teenager with the NSW RFS, he became captain of his brigade in 1985, as a 19 year old. Following this, Mr Fitzsimmons became a professional firefighter. He was appointed Commissioner in 2007 and retired from the position in 2019. He now continues to lead the disaster recovery and support the people of NSW through his work at Resilience NSW.

The Address, first delivered in 1997, is a celebration of thought, diversity of opinion and freedom of speech. Traditionally, distinguished Australians are invited to present their unique reflections on our national identity and share their vision for the future of all Australians.

Each Australia Day Address has been as individual as the person delivering it, presenting inspiring and thought-provoking messages from some of our nation's leading visionaries.

Previous Australia Day Address speakers include human rights lawyer Deng Adut; HE Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO; media icon Ita Buttrose AO OBE; novelist Thomas Keneally AO; quantum physicist Professor Michelle Simmons AO; internationally renowned mathematics teacher Eddie Woo; and founder of the #buyfromthebush initiative Grace Brennan.

The Address will be live streamed on Facebook AustraliaDay26 on Monday, 18 January 2021 from 12.30pm AEDT, with a full transcript available following the event.

Members of the public can watch and listen to the 2021 Address:

**Sky News Channel 603 on Foxtel** Full live coverage [from 12.30pm](#) AEDT

**Sky News Channel 600 on Foxtel** Highlights and key moments [from 12.30pm](#) AEDT

The Address will also be broadcast on **ABC Radio National** on Tuesday 26 January from **7.30pm to 8pm** AEDT

For more information visit [www.australiaday.com.au](http://www.australiaday.com.au)

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