



## Welcome Speech to new Australian Citizens on National Wattle Day

There are two words that I want especially, to say to you today:

### ***Congratulations*** and ***Welcome***

Congratulations on becoming citizens of Australia and welcome to the Australian family.

I also want to point out how ***extraordinarily fortunate*** you are to become Australian Citizens at wattle time. Wattle is Australia's national flower, our national floral emblem. Each year on 1 September we celebrate National Wattle Day, as Wattle is a symbol of our nation and National Wattle Day symbolises the unity of all Australians and our connection to our land. ***Wattle's blaze of colour lights up our land*** each year at this time, and each year ***reminds you of*** your commitment to your new home, Australia.

We all have our stories. Our backgrounds, our experiences, the places we live and the trials we may have endured – all these things make us who we are. They are part of our story and today you add another chapter to your story – as from today, you are Australian.

This land also has a story. It has many stories. Ancient stories - and the wattle is an integral part of the story of this land and of its people. Let me tell some of the wattle's story. Wattle has been in our land for more than ***30 million years***. It has ***welcomed us all***: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, colonials, post war and 21<sup>st</sup> century migrants. And today it welcomes you.

Australian Aboriginal peoples have lived in and with this land for at least 65,000 years – that is why they are the world's oldest living culture. And we know Wattle has had many uses in Aboriginal culture - as a source of food and shelter, of hunting tools and musical instruments and for medicinal purposes, to name just a few. It has also had many uses since the time of European settlement. I think of ***Wattle as the great witness to the whole of the Australian story***. But we can say something else, something much more profound: ***Wattle has been in the lives of every Australian who has lived in this land***. That is something to think about.

National Wattle Day (1 September) and Wattle time lift our spirits and **remind us of nature's cycle of renewal** – the chance to start again. The colours of our nation, **Green and Gold**, remind us of the green leaves and golden blossoms of the *Acacia pycnantha*, one of more than **1000 varieties** of wattles that flower at all times of the year across our land, but especially at this time.

So the Wattle's story tells us why it is such a meaningful **symbol**. It:

- Comes organically from our **land** - reminding us to care for that land;
- Its **beauty** reflects the beauty of our land and how fortunate we are to be Australian;
- It **teaches** us many things – among them **resilience** and **adaption**. Each year Wattle can remind you of the time you became Australian and of those qualities of Resilience and Adaption – qualities to which, as individuals and as a nation, we should aspire;
- And especially Wattle **unites** us all. The many varieties of Wattle are like the many **different** types of **backgrounds** that make up our Australian community and are represented here among you today. Wattle is as **diverse** as are your **backgrounds** and heritage and that is why **wattle is the symbol that binds us together as Australians**.

As you write this next chapter of your story and play your part in the bigger Australian story, **remember the resilience and adaption** that the wattle teaches us. Remember that even if things may be tough at times, **you have within you the strength to prevail and blossom in this new land**. So let the **Wattle** each year remind you of these things and draw strength from it.

May your **fortunes blossom like the golden blooms** of our Wattle. And may you always **remember, reflect** and **rejoice** each year at wattle time, on this day and your commitment to becoming Australian citizens.

**Congratulations and Welcome**

**Written by © 2020 Terry Fewtrell (Wattle Day Association Inc.)**