

# AUSTRALIA DAY AMBASSADOR SPEECH – MARLY KELLEHER



The question I'm here to answer today is 'what does being an Australian mean to me?'. That question is very broad, so I thought maybe I could condense all the ideas around being an Australian into an analogy.

Imagine that Australia is a car - let's say it's green and gold. It's a pretty good car, able to withstand some pretty tough roads. And, if the whole country of Australia is the car, then we as Aussie citizens must be the parts of the car. You've got seats, wheels, wipers, windows, the engine; all of these parts are vital in order for our green and gold car to drive. They're vital, but not in and of themselves. We all have charge of our own parts of the Australian car. Not all of us have the prestigious role of being the engine, but that doesn't make us any less important. Take away the rest of the parts, and the engine of a car would just be a big block of metal. Take away the Australian citizens and Australia wouldn't be worth anything. The point is, when I think about real Australians, I think about the mateship and comradery of Aussies as we work together, not just despite our differences but because of them, to build each other up, even if it's just by offering to take the trolley back for that person who has their hands full at the shops.

Our green and gold car- Australia - has changed a lot over the years. Let's just say that at some point, the Australian car could be likened to the old 1960s Kingswood car, my Dad's old car. It was good for the time, but Dad doesn't drive a Kingswood anymore. No offence to those of you who are old car owners, but if Australian ideas were still likened to 1960s car models, I think we'd all be scared for this country's ANCAP safety rating. Instead, just like Dad's car history, Australia's history is filled with changes, brought on by us, which were necessary for the betterment of the Australian experience. Think of the 1967 referendum regarding First Nations people, displaying the Australian society's desire to be gone with the filthy and unnecessary parts of our car which were so long holding us back. Of course I'm not saying that Australia is perfect now, we've still got a long way to go of course, but it's only through such contributions and updates from each of the parts, each of us, that it could ever become so.

I love watching as Australians act for our country: dropping in coins to the Cancer Council donation bin that you sometimes see down the street or volunteering for one of the many organisations we have circulating around Mansfield. Did you know that the 2021 census found that over  $\frac{1}{5}$  of people in the Mansfield Shire do some kind of volunteer work? That's around 2050 people working freely in some capacity to help improve the lives of people around Australia - just in our Shire alone.

Yes, that's only  $\frac{1}{5}$  of us, but we all play our part. Every 9-5 job or 5-9 job or whatever it is that you work is really the thing that fuels our car, not just keeping it going but strengthening it, every step of the way.

So, my answer to the question 'What does being an Australian mean to me?' Well, most importantly, it means putting in the effort. Doing the things that only we can do. Working every day in all those big and little ways to help the car drive smoothly.