

**Statement to be delivered by Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses,
Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, on the occasion of
Australia Day, January 26, 2018**

It is my distinct pleasure to be with you this evening and, on behalf of Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Christopher Rowley and the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to extend to the Government and People of the Commonwealth of Australia, heartfelt congratulations and best wishes as we join you in celebrating the Three Hundred and Thirtieth (330th) Anniversary of Australia Day.

On this day, Australians commemorate the founding of the colony with the arrival of the first British colonists from Great Britain and the raising of the Union Jack at Sydney Cove by Captain Arthur Phillip in 1799. Very importantly, it affords all Australians the opportunity to reflect on their contributions and achievements and that of their fellow countrymen both past and present in the course of the journey and growth of modern day Australia.

Australia today encompasses a rich amalgamation of peoples, cultures and ideas; a diverse composition that has allowed the nation to capitalise on its resources for the benefit of its citizens and to engage with neighbouring countries and others in the international community through humanitarian and developmental assistance and other spheres of cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen, this year marks the Forty-ninth (49th) anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries and I am pleased to say that our bilateral relationship has remained robust with

collaboration in various areas such as sport, culture, trade, energy, the environment, education and technical assistance as well as security.

With regard to sport, it would be difficult to speak of relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Australia and not mention Cricket, our engagement in which proves that not all rivalries are bitter. I dare say it is this competitive spirit between friends which I believe has fuelled the growth of our countries' sporting talent. In fact, our rivalry, or rather camaraderie as I would term it, has led to increasing collaboration in the sport evidenced by four Trinbagonians being selected to play on Australian teams during the Australian 2016/2017 Big Bash League and a national of Australia taking over as head coach of Trinbago Knight Riders in January 2017 from another Australian. I am delighted to acknowledge that quickly following the appointment, the Trinbago Knight Riders secured victory in the 2017 Caribbean Premier League T20 Cricket Tournament (CPLT20), which was held from August to September 2017.

High Commissioner, the fine sportsmanship of Australia is undeniable and it is for this reason that I acknowledge that the 21st Commonwealth Games, also known as Gold Coast 2018, will take place on the Gold Coast, Queensland, between April 4 and 15, 2018. All eyes will be on Australia, which on four previous occasions has hosted the Commonwealth Games. I too look forward with great anticipation to the event and to a grand showing by the athletes of our countries. I am certain that the event would further showcase Australia's commitment to excellence.

Cooperation in culture has also continued to flourish between Trinidad and Tobago and Australia. This is no surprise as both countries have thrived on

the diversity of their peoples. Most recently, Australia participated in Trinidad and Tobago's 2017 Amerindian Heritage Week, with NALIS partnering with the Australian High Commission to present the exhibition "Old Masters: Australia's Great Bark Artists". The exhibition featured fourteen (14) banners of digital bark artworks by Australian Aboriginal artists. The curator of the National Museum of Australia was the feature speaker at the launch of the exhibition on October 9, 2017. She also participated in activities arranged by the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community and conducted exhibition tours with several schools in the Port of Spain area. I am heartened by engagements such as these which foster closer intercultural communication between our two countries.

Our trade relations have also remained vibrant with a number of Trinidad and Tobago exports to Australia including our world-renowned Angostura aromatic bitters which I am sure gives that unique flavour to many of Australia's culinary fare. In turn, the popularity of Australia's numerous dairy and meat products in Trinidad and Tobago has grown, gaining a reputation for high quality. There has also been a rapidly increasing appreciation for Australian wines which have already garnered international acclaim.

Energy cooperation continues to be a very significant part of our bilateral relationship with Australia's investment in Trinidad and Tobago's energy sector. Australian firm BHP Billiton has invested over US\$327 million in oil and natural gas exploration in Trinidad and Tobago thus far and is due to restart its deep water exploration this year. It is notable that BHP Billiton has also played an active role in Trinidad and Tobago's sustainable development, investing, for example, US\$660,000 in the "Action by Civil Society in Trinidad and Tobago to Build Resilience to Climate Change Programme", which was

launched in August 2015 to build the institutional expertise of five (5) civil society groups over eighteen (18) months.

With regard to technical assistance, Trinidad and Tobago has benefited from Australia's Overseas Development Programme. While this assistance came to an end in December 2011, Trinidad and Tobago has continued to benefit indirectly through Australia's activities in the Caribbean region such as those aimed toward disaster risk reduction and fostering economic resilience. Our nationals also remain eligible to apply for Australia Awards Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships, which not only serve to build the capacity of our people but contribute to strengthening the people-to-people relations between our countries.

Another visible impact of our collaboration has been in the area of public security, with Australia rendering assistance to our protective services and civil society. This has included cooperation to develop Trinidad and Tobago's road safety system through, for example, the "Arrive Alive" campaign, as well as the sharing of Australia's more than twenty years' experience and history with the application of the red light camera system. We look forward to Australia's continued support in this area.

Our relationship has also borne fruit in multilateral fora as Trinidad and Tobago and Australia frequently collaborate on matters of mutual interest and, in particular, those pertaining to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which has contributed to the ongoing development goals of not only Trinidad and Tobago but other countries in the Caribbean region. It is for this reason that Trinidad and Tobago proffered its support for Australia's successful candidacy to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a toast, on behalf of Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley and the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to the Government and People of the Commonwealth of Australia on the occasion of Australia Day. Long may the friendship between Trinidad and Tobago and Australia flourish.