

This week we celebrate Australia Day. For so many that means the traditional Australia Day BBQ with family and friends in backyards across the nation. I will be joining Monbulk Rotary for an Australia Day breakfast and also participating in a citizenship ceremony before I head off to a BBQ in, you guessed it, a friend's backyard.

Australia Day is an opportunity for us to stop and smell the roses and give thanks for our wonderful country.

With pride we read about the men and women awarded Australia Day Honours. While some are familiar names, many others are private citizens, quietly doing extraordinary things. Across Australia, local residents are similarly recognised by local government. Congratulations to all Yarra Ranges Australia Day recipients.

Australia Day is special for me because on this day I reflect on my own family's history and the opportunity this great land provided to us. I am the son of a migrant. Dad left his home, the tiny island of Salina off the coast of Sicily, when he was 19 years old. Like thousands of others like him, he migrated to Australia with the dream of making a better life for himself and his family.

He arrived not being able to speak a word of English; and in those days people migrated knowing you were likely never to return home. His journey was a leap of faith.

He embraced his new home with all his heart and in return Australia provided him with opportunities and experiences way beyond what was available to him on the other side of the world.

I am so grateful he had the courage to take that leap of faith.

We all have such a story.

Unless you are indigenous, whose proud history on this land goes back thousands and thousands of years, every single one of us, somewhere in our own families' history, has a migration story. It may go back to the first fleet, it may be a convict history, it may be on one of the waves of migration over the last 200 years, or it may be a very recent refugee story.

Somewhere in all of our histories someone made a leap of faith and called Australia their new home. For that we give thanks on Australia Day.

Enjoy your BBQ with family and friends. And on this day particularly spare a thought for our defense force personnel in Afghanistan and other parts of the world.