



Australian High Commission
Malaysia

MEDIA RELEASE

**AUSTRALIA UNVEILS NEW MURAL IN KOTA KINABALU,
HONOURS SHARED HISTORY ON SANDAKAN DAY**

Kota Kinabalu, 14 August 2026 – The Australian High Commission in Malaysia today unveiled *Remembering Australia Place*, a vibrant new public mural in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, recognising Australia and Malaysia’s enduring friendship and historic people-to-people ties. Unveiled on the eve of Sandakan Day, the mural highlights decades of shared stories and connection that continue to shape the Australia-Malaysia relationship.

Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Her Excellency Ms Danielle Heinecke, hosted the launch with Mayor of Kota Kinabalu YBhg Dato’ Sri Dr Haji Sabin bin Samitah, and was joined by parliamentarians, local partners, community leaders and alumni of Australian universities.

Ms Heinecke said, “The *Remembering Australia Place* mural tells the story of Australians and Sabahans coming together again and again over many decades as strong friends and partners. The relationship goes beyond official cooperation, to individual friendships, cultural exchanges and community partnerships that bring our countries closer together. This artwork captures the stories of people whose lives have connected our two countries and serves as a lasting reminder of the strong bonds that continue to shape our partnership today.”

The mural is located on Wisma Intiutama building in central Kota Kinabalu, at the site informally known as ‘Australia Place’. Designed and painted by local community arts organisation, **Pillars of Sabah**, the mural uses creative storytelling to highlight the shared stories of friendship, resilience, cooperation and people-to-people ties that underpin the historic and contemporary Australia-Malaysia relationship.

The artwork carries a particularly personal story: Pillars of Sabah co-founder, Mr Jared Abdul Rahman, is the son of a Sabahan father who met his Tasmanian mother while studying in Australia under the Colombo Plan. Now based in Kota Kinabalu, Mr Jared Abdul Rahman’s story reflects how a commitment to educational and cultural exchanges decades ago led to

inter-generational storytelling that has resulted in a piece of public art for residents of Kota Kinabalu and tourists to enjoy.

Mr Abdul Rahmad said, “As an artist of both Malaysian and Australian background, I am deeply honoured to have had the support of the Australian High Commission to realise this artwork that celebrates both sides of my cultural heritage.

“Through this artwork, it has been great to bring together different generations of the Kota Kinabalu community – especially students and teachers from SMK SANZAC – to reflect on our proud history of partnership with Australia.”

The mural launch coincided with the annual Sandakan Day commemoration on 15 August, providing an opportunity to reflect on the shared wartime history that remains an important foundation of the Australia-Malaysia relationship. Ms Heinecke also travelled to Sandakan Memorial Park to join veterans’ families, community leaders, government representatives and members of the public on Sandakan Day.

Sandakan Day honours the courage, sacrifice, suffering and loss of the 2,434 prisoners of war who died during the Sandakan Death Marches in World War II. Sandakan Day also honours the courage and sacrifice of the people of Sabah, many of whom risked their lives to assist prisoners of war and support escape efforts.

Ms Heinecke added, “As we honour those who suffered and lost their lives during the Sandakan tragedy, we are reminded of the importance of preserving regional peace and strengthening the partnerships that have emerged from our shared history. Australia and Malaysia have stood and fought side by side for generations. By remembering the past and honouring the connections of our people, we continue to build a stronger partnership together. Australia remains committed to working with Malaysian partners to preserve the history of Sandakan and ensure future generations understand the lessons of war and the importance of peace.”

Australia and Malaysia share longstanding ties built on defence cooperation, education, trade, investment, tourism, cultural exchange and deep people-to-people links. From shared wartime history to contemporary partnerships across a wide range of fields, the Australia-Malaysia relationship continues to be shaped by mutual respect, trust and common interests.

The Australian High Commission thanks Kota Kinabalu City Hall, the Sandakan Municipal Council, community partners, artists, veterans' families and all those who contributed to these important events honouring the shared history and friendship between Australia and Malaysia.

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Media note: Images will be available [here](#).

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