

Protocol: Relaxed and Friendly

Prince Ermias is keenly aware that he is a guest on Australian soil, here to reinforce the bonds created through history between Australians and Ethiopians, and reinforced by the Emperor's 1968 State Visit. So His Imperial Highness adheres as a first principle to Australian customs and protocols on this visit.

- 1. The visit is defined as a “private visit by His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie to commemorate the State Visit to Australia of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1968”.
- 2. As Prince Ermias is President of The Crown Council of Ethiopia, which now operates in exile in the Diaspora (and is recognized by the current Government of the Republic of Ethiopia), the visit has historical and social significance. The Crown Council represents the Crown during an interregnum (such as now) and is the body which, under the 1955 Constitution, is charged with the selection of any successor from the Solomonic Line to the Throne. The Council has taken the view that no succession would be decided as long as the Crown remained in exile.
- 3. Prince Ermias recognises that Australians owe no deference to the Ethiopian Crown, but introductions of him to Australians will be in the form of “I would like to introduce His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie, President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia. Highness, may I present ...”. The appropriate response, initially, would be “Your Imperial Highness ...”. Thereafter, it would be appropriate to refer to him as “Highness” or “Your Highness” or “Prince Ermias”.
Note: He is *not* a “Royal Highness”.
- 4. Australians are not obliged to bow or nod to any member of a foreign Royal or Imperial Household or Monarch. However, in modern form, it would not be out of order to offer a slight nod while offering to shake hands on meeting.
- 5. Prince Ermias was educated in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, so his English is, of course, excellent. His native language is Amharic. He also has a working knowledge of German. He is the youngest grandson of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, and was, for much of his early life, raised by the Emperor in the Palace, following the premature death of his Father, HIH Prince Sahle Selassie. Note that the Ethiopian succession is not based (as the British system is) on primogeniture, but on a selection of a candidate by the Crown Council of an eligible member of the Solomonic bloodline, in accordance with certain criteria dictated by the Constitution.
- 6. His Imperial Highness carries an Ethiopian passport presented to him by the Government after the end of the *Dergue* revolutionary period.

Background

The 2017 Visit to Australia by His Imperial Highness
Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie
President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia,
to Commemorate the 1968 State Visit by His Imperial Majesty
Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia



Who is Prince Ermias?

His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie is the President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia, the Constitutional body which represents the Ethiopian Crown during an interregnum, and which, under normal circumstances, proposes successors to the Ethiopian Throne. The Prince, who is 56, is the youngest grandson of His late Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I. He is Sovereign of the Imperial Ethiopian Orders, patron of the Water Initiative for Africa, and a Senior Fellow of the International Strategic Studies Association, and an author on Red Sea issues.

The purpose of the visit, apart from the invited speaking engagements, is to commemorate the half-centenary of the State Visit to Australia of Emperor Haile Selassie I, with Princesses Sofie Desta and Ijigayehou Assfa Wossen, in 1968. The 2017 private visit is designed to enhance fundamental Ethiopian-Australian relations. The State Visit followed the despatch of delegations of goodwill tours and sportsmen — including renowned cricketer Bert Oldfield — to Ethiopia by Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies.

Formal description: A private, commemorative visit to by His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie in response to invitations to speak to business and community groups.

Official status: The visit is being coordinated with, and supported by, the Government of Ethiopia, but not at Government expense or in an official capacity. No official discussions will take place during the visit, and nor will the visit touch on political issues relating to either country.

Precedent: The Ethiopian Crown in 2016 conducted a highly-successful nine-day Commemorative Visit to Jamaica by the President of the Ethiopian Crown Council, Prince Ermias, and his wife, HIH Princess Saba Kabede, to celebrate the half-centenary of the State Visit there by Emperor Haile Selassie I. The visit included meetings with Prime Minister Andrew Holness and all significant Cabinet members, plus local dignitaries, and paved the way for a major re-opening of Ethiopia-Jamaica cultural and trade ties. The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry deployed a Consul-General to accompany and support the visit, which focused on cultural and educational matters, and which drew many thousands of wellwishers each days of the visit.

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The Context for the Australian Visit: It is significant that Emperor Haile Selassie had positive views on Australia, based in part on the fact that his capital, Addis Ababa, was in a grove of eucalyptus trees, planted from seeds from Australia by Emperor Menelik II, in the late 19th Century. But it was also based on his decision, early in his reign, to use Australian Waler horses — introduced to the Middle East by the Australian Light Horse Regiments of World War I — for the Imperial Guard Regiment. The Emperor remained interested in Australian horses throughout his life. He also focused his visit to Canberra on the Australian War Memorial, and felt a kinship with Australia's military experience in both World Wars. Of relevance to this visit, he also felt a strong link with Israel and the Jewish People, and with Maj.-Gen. Ord Wingate, who had links with both Israel and Australia (the latter particularly through Wingate's Burma experience). These factors would be reflected in the 2017 Commemorative Visit. The Australia-Ethiopia-Israel theme would be reflected in the engagement to which Prince Ermias has been invited with the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce in Perth.

Today, as during World War II, Australia and Ethiopia reflect critical influences on the Indian Ocean trade routes, as evidenced today by the establishment of an Australian Embassy in Addis Ababa (which also serves the HQ of the African Union there). His Imperial Highness is also keenly aware of the enormous charitable contributions of Australia to Ethiopia, exemplified by the commitment of obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Elinor Catherine Hamlin, AC, MBBS, FRCS, FRANZCOG, FRCOG, and her New Zealander husband, Dr Reginald Hamlin, who co-founded the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. The visit is very much about building on the humanitarian bonds between the two countries, and to thank Australia for their help to Ethiopia.

The Itinerary: Prince Ermias and two advisors arrive in Sydney on June 18, 2017. He flies to Canberra on June 21, and then to Melbourne on the morning of June 23. He flies to Perth on June 26, and departs for the United States on July 1, 2017. For security reasons, specifics of his itinerary are not published here.

Prince Ermias is scheduled to meet a range of public figures and friends in each city of the tour, as well as meeting with Ethiopian community members. It is planned that, among other things, he will lay a wreath at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, as his Grandfather did, and plant a tree at the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens, again as his Grandfather did.

