



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

CONSULAR CORPS DINNER

Tuesday 28 November, 2017

The Honourable Mr Bruce Atkinson, President of the Legislative Council

The Honourable Mr Colin Brooks, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

The Honourable Ted Baillieu, Former Premier of Victoria and **Mrs Robyn Baillieu**

Members of Parliament

Dr Hamed Al Alawi, Dean, Consular Corps Melbourne

Members of the Consular Corps Melbourne

Ms Jenny Bloomfield, State Director, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Councillor Tessa Sullivan, City of Melbourne

Mr James Watson, Regional Commander, Australian Border Force

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present and any elders with us this evening.

Tony and I are delighted to be joining you again for the annual Consular Corps Melbourne dinner, the third time we have had the privilege of attending.

These dinners have become a milestone in my term in office.

I look forward to them with the anticipation of seeing those of you who have now become old friends in the Consular Corps, those of you - more recently arrived - whom we can get to know

better in this relaxed setting and, of course, we can't wait to see what your Secretary, Trent Smyth surprises us with year on year.

How fortunate we are to have Trent's enthusiasm and talent in finding unique venues for all of us to enjoy. Could we take a moment to thank him for all his efforts on our behalves.

In world politics, this has been an interesting year.

When I am amongst diplomats, I know that describing the year as 'interesting' might be considered to be a loaded description. It can mean all sorts of things.

This year, I think it means that we have been faced with uncertainty: an uncertainty that is challenging to all economies – to individuals, businesses and countries alike.

We know that uncertainty can lead to fear and a reluctance to invest, a reluctance to trade and a temptation to withdraw. It can lead to a retreat from global engagement.

I spoke on this topic recently at the World Chinese Economic Summit in Hong Kong. And I spoke of the single best tool to mitigate global economic uncertainty as being deeper engagement: the building of stronger relationships - where information flows, insights are shared and collaboration is extended.

I have the firm view that uncertainty and insular thinking are the enemies of investment and, in turn, the enemies of prosperity. Whereas, stability, openness and mutual understanding encourage prosperity at home, and between nations.

It is in times of global uncertainty that the effort that we have spent building trust, and cultivating relationships, delivers enhanced value. It is also the time to double our efforts to engage more deeply, rather than to retreat.

It is interesting to look at the history of Victoria.

I hope that most of you by now have visited our beautiful Government House. I hope too that its beauty and its grandeur are clear to see. It might be apparent that it was built at a time of immense wealth in Victoria following the discovery of gold in our State.

What is interesting though is that, as we reflect on this State's history, we see periods of insularity: periods that were the least successful in our history. Yes, history tells us that in periods of insular thinking, Victoria's economy has suffered.

In the early 1900s – during a period of insularity – Victoria went from being the world's richest colony to the Australia's weakest state economically.

On the other hand, Victoria's strong growth over recent decades has coincided with an open approach to international engagement and partnerships. This, is no coincidence.

We value our flourishing international partnerships. They come in many forms, and involve many countries.

The Consular Corps is fundamental to these important partnerships.

For over 92 years, the Corps has played a significant role in ensuring that the interests of Victoria and the 75 nations represented, are harnessed for our mutually beneficial progress, stability and harmony.

From innovation to trade, sport to the arts and education to immigration, your tireless work across borders, with Victoria and with each other, is to the benefit of all our jurisdictions.

This year, as in past years, Tony and I have been delighted to welcome guests from all nations to Government House.

We see many of you on so many different occasions: at cultural events, as we receive visiting students and dignitaries including Heads of State, as we host international conference or business meeting participants, International Dialogues and Youth Dialogues and government officers on exchange, as we celebrate awards, engage with community and business groups that span all nationalities or, for example, as we did in August this year when we welcomed representatives of 18 different countries to play AFL football here!

And, may I thank those of you who have supported us in preparation for our State Visits over the course of this year. Your wisdom, insight and introductions have been invaluable in the lead up to and during our official travel.

In a world that is seemingly more divided - focused on identifying the negatives of difference as opposed to the positives – you, the members of our Consular Corps, provide a platform upon which improved understanding, collaboration, trade and investment are built.

Tony and I thank you for that.

We thank you too for having us join you this evening. It gives us the chance to see everyone before the summer break. But it also gives us the opportunity to congratulate you on your work throughout this year.

We wish you all a happy and safe holiday period, and look forward to productive work together in the new year.

In fact, the better way to express our wishes for you in 2018 is to wish you all, in accordance with the words of Victoria's State motto: 'Peace and Prosperity'.