



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

CENTENARY OF THE GRAIN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Thursday, 21 September 2017

Mr Adrian Murphy, President of the Grain Industry Association of Victoria

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 to any elders with us this evening.

Tony and I are delighted to have this opportunity to welcome you to Government House.

One hundred years of life for any Association is a remarkable achievement: truly something to celebrate.

I suppose that at such a significant point in your history, I could talk to you about the future of the grain industry.

I could talk about the commercial opportunities created by the revolutions in industrialisation and urbanisation that are sweeping Asia in general, and China in particular.

Or I could talk about the storeyed history of your Association – which has survived everything from droughts to floods to fires.

But what stands out to me this evening is just how appropriate it is that we are celebrating the centenary of the Grain Industry Association of Victoria right here in Government House.

It is appropriate because the histories of this place and your Association are connected.

Your Association's forerunner – the Melbourne Corn Exchange – was established at the height of the First World War: just after Australia agreed to sell 3 million tons of wheat to Britain in support of the war effort. And in a sense, the war effort began right here in Government House, this being the home at the time of our Governor-General, under whose hand the official declaration of war was issued.

Government House's connection with the Great War intensified after that – with the Ballroom becoming a factory for the Red Cross.

In other words, while north of the Divide battalions of men harvested grain to feed the ANZACs, here, battalions of women came to pack medical supplies and make uniforms and bandages to care for the ANZACs.

I wonder what that generation of men and women would make of the Australia of 2017.

After all, much has changed since then.

In the last 100 years, humanity has gone from the machine age to the space age to the digital age. I can only imagine how much more science and technology the grain industry has at its disposal today.

And yet – in a fundamental way – nothing has changed because we are still connected to the land.

We still depend on its seasons to feed and support us.

And – as climate change demonstrates – we ignore that connection at our peril.

That is why it is important – at times like this – to celebrate institutions such as yours.

It is important because the Grain Industry Association of Victoria is a living institution, recognising the hard work of generations of men and women.

And we should respect the work of those generations.

We should not forget the hard lessons they learned.

And we should live up to the responsibility to keep that connection alive for another generation – and another century.

Victoria's grain industry is important to its prosperity. We thank our farmers, all those in the supply chain and the GIAV for its contribution to this billion dollar industry.

We are delighted to celebrate your history at Government House and wish you all the best.

After all, in many ways this House is your home.