



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

INVESTITURE OF AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS AND AWARDS

Wednesday 13th April, 2016

Mr Graham Ashton AM APM, Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police

Mr Craig Lapsley PSM, Emergency Management Commissioner

Senior representatives of the Australian Defence Forces

Mr Paul Wheelton OAM, Chairman, Victoria Branch, The Order of Australia Association

Honours recipients

Ladies and gentlemen

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

In September last year, as a very new Governor, having assumed the role just a few months before, I presided over my first Investiture here in this Ballroom. It was genuinely a delight for me. As a “veteran” now of two investitures, I can say that these ceremonies are absolutely central to the privilege of the Governor’s role.

It is a role, as you are probably well aware, that carries with it three main areas of responsibility.

The Governor is the guardian of the State Constitution on behalf of all Victorians, ensuring that our democratic processes are safeguarded, for example by overseeing an orderly transition between governments after an election is held.

The Governor presides over important ceremonial occasions, such as Australia Day and ANZAC Day, and contributes to building the relationships and engagement that is vital to Victoria’s economic and social well-being.

And, the Governor performs a community role, to do all that she can to bring people together and to recognise and facilitate the good work of others as they contribute in every possible way to our State.

I particularly relish this community role. It enables me to meet a broad range of people, and to see a variety of clever and innovative organisations, institutions and community groups.

I thought I knew Victoria well, having been a proud Victorian throughout my life, but the more I travel the State, the more I see and learn, and the more I am able to celebrate the diversity of our landscape, people and talents.

But I think the Governor's greatest privilege is the opportunity to congratulate people for their contributions and achievements, in so many contexts, be it via an award or a celebration, sometimes by a visit, by participating in an event, or by attending and/or hosting a special occasion.

The investiture of Australian honours, naturally, stands tall amongst such occasions.

It is a pleasure to have the chance to say "thank you" because, in my view, people generally don't receive enough recognition for their contributions and achievements.

We are so often quick to highlight what is lacking or what could be done better. In a fast moving world, we are often too keen to turn to the next project that needs to start or, we simply forget to pause and say that someone's good efforts are noticed. To tell them: "Well done".

And so specifically to today.

I am satisfied that there is no one amongst the recipients today who has contributed in outstanding ways simply to attract praise and acclaim.

Moreover, many of you, I suspect, are uncomfortable as the sole focus of attention in your recognised area of contribution.

That came through clearly to me in letters that I received from some of you in the lead up to today. I can't tell you how many times I read variations of the words and sentiments that this is an award, "that I share with the many wonderful people I have had the privilege of working with" or, that this award "is in recognition of this extremely important area of work."

What also emerged was a heartfelt and heart-warming appreciation of partners and families for their direct and indirect contributions.

I have no doubt at all that the support wrapped around you, whether in a professional or a personal sense, has been of immeasurable help in your journey towards this honour, but may I urge you to allow yourself at least this moment, or better still, the rest of the time you are with us today, to relax into the celebration of your own contributions. Accept the recognition. Enjoy the accolades. You have earned it. There is truly so much for you to feel good about.

You have made a contribution to your communities – and beyond, in many instances even far beyond our own shores.

Although you come from every corner of our State today, from Mildura to Lucknow, and your awards recognize contributions to fields as varied as military duty, education, medical research, conservation, regional communities, international relations or multicultural youth, to name just a few, the common ground between you all is that – to borrow the words of President Kennedy – you have not asked what your country can do for you. Nor have you even just asked what you can do for your country as some sort of empty rhetorical question. You have asked that question, and you have answered it with your deeds and your dedication.

In doing so, you have enriched our country and of course our State. You are recognised for that today, in all the different forms that your cleverness, generosity, hard work and altruism have taken.

I thank you for contributing, in accordance with Victoria's State motto, to our "Peace and Prosperity", and I hope that you will now enjoy your time here this morning in your beautiful Government House.