



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

MELBOURNE GIRLS' GRAMMAR ARTEMIS CENTRE OPENING

Friday 1 September, 2017

Mrs Catherine Misson, Principal, Melbourne Girls' Grammar
Professor Katie Allen, Chair of Council
The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier, Archbishop of Melbourne, Primate of Australia
Ms Kitty Chiller, distinguished Old Grammarian and Olympian
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

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

My husband, Tony and I thank you for inviting us to join you this morning.

It did not take us long to agree to participate in the commissioning of this magnificent Artemis Centre.

First, you are, of course, amongst our nearest neighbours.

Secondly, we know of the wonderful opportunities you create for young women.

And, thirdly, we have enjoyed watching this Centre grow out of the ground, particularly knowing what it will give to your students.

As neighbours, we share this precinct with you. You would be unaware of the joy that gives us. It is at its highest on the not infrequent occasions when, as we are plodding up the Anderson Street hill, we are overtaken by a swarm of Melbourne Girls' Grammar girls out for a run. We enjoy two particular things about that.

First, as we try to both breathe and sustain a reasonable conversation as we ascend, they are a cacophony of easy chatter and laughter as they bound past.

But it is the bouncing of ponytails that most make us smile. It is like being in the wake of a group of little brumbies. The fact that we have only sons might explain our delight in this regard.

Then, I suspect that you will not be shocked to hear that the education of young women is a topic dear to my heart.

Of course, I am rather enthusiastic about education for all young people! But until the day of gender parity, the education of young women is something that, as a community, we must ensure is specifically nurtured and resourced.

In 2014, The World Economic Forum predicted that it would take until 2095 (that is, 81 years) to achieve global gender parity. Just one year later, in 2015, this prediction was blown out to 2133 (that is, a wait of 117 years). In 2016, the prediction was 2186 or 170 years!

Moreover, in 2014, Australia ranked 24th overall in the world in gender equality; in 2015, 36th; and, last year 46th.

There is still much work to be done.

To flourish, Australia needs to be able to draw on nothing less than 100% of our talent pool.

What a pleasure it is to be here with a school community that places such a high value on educating young women so that each one of them may have the confidence to reach their full potential without constraint.

And that brings me to this magnificent Artemis Centre.

When I was at school, we did not have a wellbeing agenda or a centre devoted to it. There are probably two main reasons for that.

First, these girls are growing up in more complex times than I did. I have no doubt that the complexities for the young women at school today extend beyond the simple choice of career that absorbed my time at their age.

Their environment is more global and therefore requires a greater understanding of a wider horizon.

Their economy is more disrupted and shall continue to be, requiring an agility of thought and skill that we could only have guessed at.

And conflict comes in challenging forms that we had never seen.

But the other reason that we did not have such a Centre was quite simply because I was at school in the 'olden days' and, fortunately, the body of knowledge as to developing and nurturing the whole person has evolved since then.

In combination, this school's acute awareness of the challenging environment into which today's students will be thrust – combined with a sophisticated understanding of how to develop and sustain the resilience that they shall require for a full life in any of their future endeavours – leads us to this marvellous Centre to be commissioned today.

It combines all facets of wellbeing - mental, social and physical – to ensure that Melbourne Grammar girls shall leave their schooling years armed not only with substantive educational achievements, but with the confidence to know and look after themselves (and others), to appreciate and work with diversity, to collaborate with others, and to show resilience in the face of the inevitable life obstacles that crop up from time to time.

I am sure that its naming for the Greek Goddess, Artemis, is not by happenstance.

How apt it is for this Centre to carry the name of one of the most venerated of all the Greek deities. Artemis was, amongst other things, Goddess of the hunt. She was not daunted or outshone by any man. And she was the protectress of girls and women. And she represents strength and good health.

Others will talk in more detail about this building. For my part, I particularly liked the 'Me Zone' and the main learning commons – although some might say I am biased – because it comes with a view of Government House!

But, above all, I love the fact that this building is just a part – and an aesthetically beautiful part – of a philosophy that underpins a holistic education for girls.

And so it is, with great pleasure, that I now declare the Melbourne Girls' Grammar Artemis Centre officially open.