



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

OPENING OF THE MELTON BOTANIC GARDEN

Wednesday 11 October, 2017

Ms Ros Spence MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Public Transport and for Roads, representing the Honourable Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria

Mr Don Nardella MP, Member for Melton

Councillor Sophie Ramsey, Mayor, and other Councillors of Melton City Council

Mr Kelvin Tori, Chief Executive Officer, Melton City Council

Mr John Bentley, President, and other members of the Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden

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 afternoon.

That acknowledgement is always important, but never more so than when we are specifically celebrating new growth on, and the use of, this ancient land.

Tony and I thank you for inviting us to join you this afternoon.

It did not take us long to agree to participate in the opening of these beautiful gardens.

Since I have been Governor, we have had a heightened appreciation of gardens and their importance.

We have the privilege, of course, of living in one of the most magnificent gardens in Victoria and, on our doorstep, we have one of the oldest and most established botanic gardens in Australia.

Over the last two years, we have had the pleasure of exploring these gardens, witnessing daily the joy that they bring to local residents, and to visitors from right around Victoria, Australia and overseas.

Our Royal Botanic and other gardens have no doubt helped Melbourne to be named seven times in a row as the world's most liveable city.

Victorians have a long and proud history of developing, creating and enjoying gardens. I am sure many of you will remember that from the 1970's until the early 1990's we held the distinguished title of *Garden State* on our number plates and in our guide books.

We can be grateful that, with great foresight, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, Charles La Trobe, (himself an enthusiastic botanist....and for that matter, a keen hunter of beetles and butterflies), set aside large tracts of land around Melbourne for open space, parkland and gardens.

That allowed landscape designer, Clement Hodgkinson, and Director of the newly established Royal Botanic Gardens, William Guilfoyle, to landscape many of the parks and gardens we are lucky to still enjoy today.

La Trobe saw the intrinsic value of gardens and parklands as a place of social and community cohesion, pleasure and intrigue. And it is very much in this spirit that the Melton Botanic Garden has been created.

This garden resonates with me for several reasons.

First, it is young and full of promise. There is a particular pleasure in viewing a garden in its infancy and at this time of year - half way through spring. We can sense that this garden will continue to blossom into something truly magnificent.

Secondly, Botanic gardens are, in and of themselves, a great symbol of collaboration.

This is a real community garden: for the community and of the community. Local community members, with staff, have invested their time, their energy, their skill and care. And they have made generous financial donations as well.

This spirit of collaboration is nowhere more evident than in the efforts of one group in particular. The Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden were established in September 2003, following the success of a public forum held to discuss the feasibility of establishing a garden in this very spot.

Your persistence and dedication across 14 years, your active volunteering and your partnership with the Melton City Council and local businesses and enterprises, has seen over \$310,000 worth of funds raised for, and the realisation of, this growing garden.

As we toured today, I was delighted to see so much of your local community's spirit in practice: from the park benches made entirely of recycled plastic, to the vibrant art work covering the exterior of the comfort station, designed and created by the Aboriginal Men's Group.

And finally, this garden resonated with us because it so richly symbolises diversity and co-existence.

It brings together plants - both native and rare and exotic - and people as rich and diverse as the garden itself. It is a place in which the Californian Garden sits next to the Central and South American Gardens. The Mediterranean Garden leads to the South Australian Garden, and the South African Garden borders the West Australian.

Of particular interest to us is the Bush Tucker Garden. It provides a golden opportunity for us in the city to learn about bush tucker. And, having recently established a Government House Kitchen Garden, we know the joy an edible garden can bring to the community.

And so, finally, I would like to thank all of those involved in bringing this garden to life.

To the Melton City Council, the Friends of Melton Botanic Garden, the community volunteers, and the numerous business and community organisations who have helped: a huge thank you and congratulations to all of you for bringing your vision to life, and for building such a lovely legacy for your community for many, many generations to come.

In a moment it will give me great pleasure to officially open the magnificent Melton Botanic Garden, with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque.