



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**UN ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIAN DIVISION INC.) WORLD
ENVIRONMENT DAY AWARDS**

Monday 6th June, 2016

The Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio MLA, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Suburban Development and representing the Premier

Dr Gillian Sparkes, Commissioner for Environment Sustainability Victoria

Mr Michael Henry, President of the United Nations Association of Australia (Victorian Division Inc.)

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

I also 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 this evening.

Tony and I are delighted to be with you this evening.

As Patron of the Victorian Division of the United Nations Association of Australia, I am well aware of the wonderful work you do, highlighting the importance of the United Nations, as well as your tireless work to rally the community on key educational, environmental, human rights and social justice issues.

In fact, your organisation has much in common with my role. It is central to our respective responsibilities to educate the community on the importance of institutions that underpin our stability, democracies and freedoms.

In your case, it is as to a strong, effective and credible United Nations, a critical underpinning of global order. In my case, it is as to the role of an independent Head of State, the guardian of the State Constitution, and an apolitical leader whose role it is to bring people together for the peace and prosperity of our State.

This evening's event represents a happy aspect of both our roles.

Under the UN auspices, you have created a celebration today in recognition of World Environment Day, and you have drawn attention to those right here who contribute so much in that regard.

From my perspective, one of the aspects of my role that I enjoy the most, is the privilege of celebrating the good work of others. Not because they expect or demand it. But because we should say “thank you”, and because they inspire others.

World Environment Day resonates with me more strongly than ever, this year.

Even in my relatively short time as the Governor, I have been fortunate to preside over the Victorian Government Landcare awards and have seen the brilliant individual and group responses. I have seen the importance of ground breaking research being carried out at the Australian Grains Gene Bank in Horsham. And, in my travels through ten shires and councils in regional Victoria, I have heard firsthand from farmers in parts of our State ravaged by drought, and listened too to our State Emergency Services managers talking of the environmental impact of fires and other disasters.

I am interested that this 44th World Environment Day has as its theme, ‘Go Wild For Life’, encouraging us to think about all the species under threat, and to take action of our own to help safeguard them for future generations.

As Patron of Zoos Victoria, I have already been fortunate enough to observe the emphasis on conservation in the Healesville and Parkville zoos. I saw sophisticated programs to save the Tasmanian Devil, Lord Howe Island stick insects and Southern Corroboree Frog.

I was particularly heartened to see the elaborate 27 year long captive breeding program to re-establish a stable wild population of our State bird: the critically endangered little Helmeted Honeyeater.

Tonight though is about different groups of people working to help the environment. Although we are yet to formally recognise and hear from the recipients, reading their citations earlier, I was struck by the level of dedication, skill and passion that each of them has shown.

I look forward to congratulating them personally in just a moment and I especially commend the establishment of this year’s new category, the Infrastructure Innovation award. It’s important for Victoria – and the wider world of course, as well.

Finally, I congratulate Dr Michael Henry, President of the Board of the UNAA's Victorian Division on the work that he and his Board are doing. I have known Dr Henry for many years and know that whatever he does, he does in full measure.

I wish you all a very pleasant evening.

Thank you.