



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## VICTORIAN'S MULTICULTURAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2017

**Thursday 23 November, 2017**

**The Honourable James Merlino MP**, Deputy Premier, Minister for Education, representing the Premier

**The Honourable Robin Scott MP**, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Finance

**Mrs Inga Peulich MLC**, Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Shadow Minister for Scrutiny of Government, representing the Leader of the Opposition

**Ms Helen Kapalos**, Chairperson, Multicultural Commission and **Multicultural Commissioners**

**Mr Andrew Crisp APM**, Acting Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police

**Distinguished guests**

**Award nominees**

**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 here with us this evening.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you all to the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

One of the real privileges of the Governor's role is being able to thank and congratulate the Victorians who make major contributions to our community.

Given how integral multiculturalism is to the identity and essence of our State, it is a particular privilege and pleasure to host this ceremony, held here since the awards started 16 years ago.

Since the time of this ceremony last year, we now have new census statistics.

And so we know that within our Victorian population of nearly 6 million people, (and rapidly growing), nearly 30% of us were born overseas, and almost half of us were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.

We come from over 200 countries.

More than one quarter of us speak languages other than English at home – from almost 260 different languages – and we follow more than 130 different faiths.

However, this is not an audience to whom I need recite more detailed statistics as to the hundreds of cultures, faiths and language groups represented in Victoria.

You not only know the figures, you also know the people and the issues behind the figures. You know what diversity actually looks like, well beyond mere numbers on an official government website.

As Governor, I see so much to be proud of as I move around the community right across our State whether, for example in Swan Hill at the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, or the Memory Lane Cafe in Albion, or right here when we are joined each Monday by refugee and migrant women from Community Hubs in our 'Peace and Prosperity' kitchen garden.

I am conscious that, again, these are not things that you need me to tell you about.

You are the ones who, in government agencies, local councils, community associations and clubs, in businesses and individually; in the country, in regional centres and in more remote places; with the young, the old and the in between; and in education, youth, health, media and policing, to name just a few areas – you are the ones who work tirelessly to make Victoria as richly diverse and harmonious as it can be.

And you are a group that doesn't need me to tell you what more needs to be done. You not only know it. You have already thought about it. You have decided to do something about it. And you have rolled your sleeves up and are working on it.

That's why you are here.

No doubt, like me, each one of you is proud of our multiculturalism: proud of our overall harmony, our capacity to live with difference, the respect with which difference is for the most part enjoyed.

But I do like to caution that, if we allow pride to blind us to the ambition to always improve, then we shall be selling ourselves short, selling our children and grandchildren short, and selling Victoria short.

We must all continue to strive to ensure that those newly arrived to live here are welcomed, and that each child or adult has the same opportunities as his or her peers, wherever born, whatever their faith, or whatever their language.

We never need to be embarrassed that multiculturalism, in its best and most thorough form, will always be a work in progress. To view it otherwise is to miss the opportunity to always improve.

Thank you to all those charged with the task of organising and judging these awards, for what you do to help everyone to keep raising the bar.

Congratulations to each of you who will take home an award this evening. Congratulations too to each of you nominated for an award, and to all the families, colleagues and supporters for all that they do to help you in your work and volunteering.

I am heartened that, in the safe hands in this room, Victoria can remain at the vanguard of multiculturalism. It is, after all, what contributes so greatly to us as a clever and innovative State, to Melbourne as the world's most liveable city, and to achieving - to quote our State's motto - the "Peace and Prosperity" that we all crave for ourselves and our families.

It is now my pleasure to invite the Deputy Premier to address you.