



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

BREAKFAST FOR WHITE RIBBON DAY 2017

Friday 24 November, 2017

The Hon Bruce Atkinson MLC, President of the Legislative Council

Ms Georgie Crozier MLC, Shadow Minister for Families and Children, Prevention of Family Violence and Housing

Professor Nicholas Cowdery AM QC, Chair, White Ribbon Australia

White Ribbon Ambassadors

Distinguished guests

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 morning.

Tony and I are very pleased to welcome you here, on the eve of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to acknowledge the important and ongoing contributions of the White Ribbon Campaign to the prevention of violence against women.

Last year, as some of you will know, we hosted a White Ribbon Day breakfast at Government House for the first time. I recall saying that it was difficult to judge whether it was an occasion for words that were optimistic or pessimistic in nature.

I think I said that it was both. Today, I still feel that way.

We know – and I do understand that I really don't need to preach to our guests who have taken the time and trouble to be with us here early this morning – that in this beautiful 'liveable' city of ours, and throughout all of Victoria and Australia, too many women are still dying, and too many are permanently scarred from physical, mental and emotional abuse.

We also know that in the majority of instances, such violence occurs in the home: in a place that should afford the most assured safety and security, love and support.

We know that in this country at least one woman is killed every week, by her current or former partner. We know that intimate partner violence is the leading cause of death, disability and ill-health in women aged between 15 and 44.

And we know that the numbers and the experiences are worse again for indigenous women and women in rural and regional areas.

And if we need to be persuaded of the economic as well as the human cost, we know from the recent Royal Commission that the total cost of family violence to our economy is almost \$920 million.

And finally, might I say that we do know that women still do not share equally in the community's wealth, jobs or power – and that gender inequity helps sow the seeds of violence perpetrated against them.

Victoria is not alone in any of this. Australia is not alone in it either. In very many countries, women fare even worse.

Our ambition is to ensure the safest and the best life for all of our mothers, our sisters and daughters.

We want our community to be the best it can be. We want, and we need ALL Victorians to be equal, to flourish and to be safe. We need our children to be secure, and to have modelled to them respectful and caring conduct, to enhance their development and their own adult lives.

As a Family Court judge for 18 years, I saw the effect on women, on children, on families and on the broader community when partners and fathers were violent.

As a criminal court judge, my husband saw the ravages of physical and sexual violence against women.

And so, with that background, we are committed to White Ribbon and all that it does to gather together people who want to and can make a difference.

I have highlighted some of the problems that we know well.

Fortunately, what we also know well is that there are promising changes afoot.

We know of the Victorian Royal Commission's significant work and its far reaching recommendations that are now being implemented.

We know that the Victorian Government appointed our nation's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the late the Hon Fiona Richardson for the commitment she showed to that role.

And I have seen first-hand this year, the continued efforts and milestones achieved right across our community, from the Domestic Violence Resource Centre of Victoria celebrating its 30 years of tremendous work, to the celebration in the West of our city of the 'Launch of Preventing Violence Together 2030 Strategy, amongst so many others.

And then there is, of course, White Ribbon's ongoing work and dedication.

Through education, awareness raising and a focus on primary prevention, you highlight the positive role that men and boys can play to stop violence against women.

You provide programs such as the Breaking the Silence Schools Program (providing foundational knowledge, tools and strategies to implement respectful relationships and domestic violence education programs in schools), and the White Ribbon Workplace Accredited Program. You support White Ribbon Ambassadors and Advocates, and undertake research on violence towards women and its social impact.

The work undertaken by the White Ribbon Foundation would not be possible without all those involved, from the Board members to the Committees and those Ambassadors, Advocates and

Partners. I would like to thank each and every one of you for the pivotal role you play in working towards ending men's violence against women.

You help everyone to understand and appreciate that violence against women is not just a women's issue – to be resolved by women or to be talked about just by women – that it is, in fact, one of the greatest social ills of our time and one we must all work together to resolve.

And so there is much about which we can feel optimistic. Thank you for that and helping to ensure that – perhaps one day – violence perpetrated by men against women will be something less familiar to future generations in Victoria and beyond.