



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **BENDIGO CIVIC RECEPTION**

**Wednesday 6 December 2017**

**The Honourable Jacinta Allan MP**, Minister for Public Transport and Major Projects and Leader of the House (Assembly)

**Ms Maree Edwards MP**, Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

**Mr Luke O'Sullivan MP**, Member of Parliament

**Councillor Margaret O'Rourke**, Mayor, City of Greater Bendigo and **Councillors**

**Mayors and Councillors** of surrounding Shires

**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 with us this afternoon.

My husband Tony and I are absolutely delighted to be here in Bendigo.

During my two and half years as Governor, we have had the opportunity to visit Bendigo on a number of occasions and we are always delighted to be welcomed back.

Bendigo is one of the fastest growing cities in Victoria - the State that is also Australia's fastest growing. It is predicted that within the next 20 years, your population will have grown by 35%.

You can feel the energy here, and today I have been exposed to some of the best aspects of the growth and vitality of which you can be proud.

Earlier this afternoon we had the pleasure to meet with a group of entrepreneurs and innovators from around the Greater Bendigo area: a diverse group of people, with interests ranging from technology to the environment to the arts.

How wonderful to discuss the future of Victoria with so many promising and original minds, a testament to the great talent and culture of collaboration which exists in this region.

It was wonderful too that Haven: Home, Safe, the affordable housing service, houses the innovation hub space: another fine example of collaboration.

This morning, we toured manufacturers – Thales and then Australian Defence Apparel, part of the Australian business and manufacturing landscape for over 100 years. Each one provides essential equipment and technology to the Australian Defence Force.

What impressive businesses, employing over 450 local residents between them, and over 3,500 nationally.

Bendigo is well known as a hub for arts and culture.

We are fortunate this afternoon to be joined by the Bendigo Youth Choir, of which I am the proud Patron.

For the last 34 years the Youth Choir, under the tireless stewardship of its founder and Artistic Director, Mrs Valerie Broad OAM, has travelled Victoria, Australia and the world - performing in spectacular fashion.

I note a particularly special occasion in June this year when they performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City. What a thrill it must have been for them, and what an honour for Bendigo and Victoria to have such bright, talented and professional ambassadors.

It is great to see so many young people up on stage from all different schools, backgrounds and ages. The Choir is another wonderful example of local collaboration and connectivity.

I am very much looking forward to hearing them perform shortly.

Although we have not been able to visit there today, of course I am familiar with your wonderful Bendigo Art Gallery. When I was a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria, we even held a meeting as guests at your gallery.

It is truly wonderful, and continues to attract an exciting program of local and international exhibitions, to the envy of many regional galleries throughout the world.

The recent announcement that one of Australia's oldest and most exciting theatre-makers for young people, the Arena Theatre Company, will re-establish itself as a regionally-based theatre company in Bendigo, is also a great testament to the thriving cultural ecosystem and willingness to support, sustain and produce home-grown culture here.

Today we have not had the opportunity to visit any schools, but I do just want to mention Bendigo's contributions to Victoria's status as the 'Education State'.

You can feel very proud that two of your schools have been recognised among the recipients of this year's Victorian Education Excellence Awards.

Bendigo Special Developmental School received the Outstanding Inclusive Education Award.

I have just met staff and students from Bendigo Special Development School. We welcomed them at Government House as part of a program we have to invite special schools to engage with us, by making scarecrows for our Kitchen Garden. Their scarecrow was full of personality, and it was obvious that the staff and children had shared a very happy time putting him together. (YOUR ECSTASY)

The other local school recently honoured was the Specimen Hill Primary School. Principal, Ms Di Craig, was the recipient of the Outstanding Primary Principal Award.

I should add that Bendigo's higher education institutions are also fine examples of this region's commitment to education.

In April of this year, I had the great pleasure of installing Professor Richard Larkins AO as the seventh Chancellor of La Trobe University, at the magnificent Ulumbarra Theatre.

La Trobe University is such an integral part of the Bendigo community. There is a wide selection of courses offered, and state-of-the art research facilities like the La Trobe Rural Health School, making a big difference in the health, well-being and social care of people living in this region. It is impressive.

Thank you to the council of Greater Bendigo for providing this magnificent venue for us this afternoon.

Thank you to all those from PepperGreen Farm Catering (from the social enterprise division of Access Australia Group in Bendigo) for helping us with service.

Thank you all for joining us. We are delighted for this opportunity to thank you for all that you do to contribute to Bendigo and the region's success, and to Victoria's prosperity. Creating the world's most liveable community.

We hope that you enjoy our hospitality, and we look forward to chatting with you shortly.