



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

OPENING THE 42ND PORT FAIRY FOLK FESTIVAL

Friday 9 March, 2018

Mr John Young, President, Port Fairy Folk Festival

Cr Mick Wolfe, Mayor, Moyne Shire

Mr Derek Guille, Festival Ambassador, Port Fairy Folk Festival

Dr Jamie McKew, Founding Director, Port Fairy Folk Festival

Performers and music lovers.

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 elders here with us this evening.

Thank you in particular to the Elders for their warm welcome to country.

Tony and I are delighted to join you for the Opening of the Port Fairy Folk Festival: the 42nd Festival, but our first!

What an achievement!

There are not many cultural festivals that can count more than four continuous decades. They are simply not easy to run.

As one Festival ends, with its complex programming and performing schedule put to bed, the planning for and the pressures surrounding the next one are already in train.

This is no mean feat. Festival organisers are always trying to balance logistics and clockwork precision, with a flawless creative flavour and flair.

As a former President of the Melbourne Festival, I know of these challenges first-hand.

But I also know what drives the organisers, and I think I have an insight into some of the ingredients of the remarkable success of this particular Festival.

First, it has superb content.

For the folk aficionados, there is Jeff Lang. For the un-initiated, a love of folk can creep up on you by listening to the fresh band, All our Exes Live in Texas.

There is sublime Indigenous content including Archie Roach, Gina Williams and Guy Ghouse.

And musicians from all parts of Victoria – celebrating our much cherished diversity – including the Cartridge family and the Davidson Brothers.

And performers from much further afield, including My Bubba from Scandinavia, Harry Manx from Canada, and Nano Stern from Chile.

Another reason for the long-term success of the Port Fairy Folk Festival is that it is deeply embedded in community.

This Festival is run by more than 1,000 volunteers, including those who offer their time and skills during the festival, and those dedicated individuals who volunteer throughout the year.

Their tireless work underpins every aspect of this Festival.

I was proud to present the Port Fairy Folk Festival volunteers with the 2016 Premier's Volunteer Champion Award for Teamwork for Regional and Rural Victoria' at Government House.

In particular, we thank the Festival's President, Mr John Young, and the members of the volunteer committee, and the Program Director, Ms Caroline Moore and her dedicated team. A special mention too, of Mr Bruce Leishman who has since last year's Festival, handed over the reins as President after 19 years, and 26 years (so far) on the Committee.

And, I think the final ingredient of the success of this Festival is that - to state the obvious when we look around us this evening - it is held in 'paradise'. Who doesn't either love this beautiful part of our state, or doesn't fall instantly in love with it when they visit?

What pride the organisers can take in the growth of this Festival, since it was established in 1977. It has evolved from an audience of just a few hundred in its early days, to more than 10,000 audience members today.

But not only is this a feel-good musical experience. The Port Fairy Folk Festival leaves a local economic footprint of \$9 million, enabling surplus funds of over \$1 million to be invested back into the community through the grants program.

And, indeed, what a contribution the Festival makes to the flourishing creative industries across Victoria - what is often referred to as 'the Creative State'.

Our creative industries contribute more than \$22 billion to Victoria - or 8 per cent of the total economy.

But don't they contribute so much more than that? They bring us together, they give us unparalleled beauty....and, at times, they provoke us to expand our thinking and they can, just as this year's Festival emphasises, open us to celebrating excellence and diversity.

The very ethos of music and art is about sharing with others, delighting new audiences and fundamentally striving for more harmonious and connected communities.

We can all be grateful to the Port Fairy Folk Festival for its part in sharing its creativity, delighting us in the process, and modelling - through the music and through its generous spirited volunteering - that when we come together, we can achieve more connected and harmonious communities.

And so, it gives me great joy to declare the 42nd Port Fairy Folk Festival officially open.