



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **GRANDMOTHERS' PROJECT LAUNCH: MULTICULTURAL MUSEUMS**

**Thursday 3 May, 2018**

**The Honourable Philip Dalidakis MLC**, Minister for Trade and Investment, Innovation and the Digital Economy and Small Business

**The Honourable Sir James Gobbo AC CVO QC**, Former Governor of Victoria

**Mrs Inga Peulich MLC**, Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Representing the Leader of the Opposition

**Mr Mark Wang**, Deputy Chairman, Chinese Museum Board

**Mr David Krasnostein**, Director, Hellenic Museum Melbourne

**Dr Hass Dellal AO**, Chairman, Islamic Museum of Australia

**Mrs Bruna Pasqua**, Vice President, CO.AS.IT

**Mr Barry Fradkin OAM**, President, Jewish Museum of Australia

**Ms Joyce Agee**, Senior Curator, Chinese Museum

**Mr John Tatoulis**, Chief Executive Officer, Hellenic Museum

**Mr Ali Fahour**, General Manager, Islamic Museum of Australia

**Mr Ferdinando Colarossi**, Representing Museo Italiano

**Ms Rebecca Forgasz**, Director and Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Museum of Australia

**Ms Helen Kapalos**, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission

**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 morning.

I am delighted to welcome you here to the launch of the Multicultural Museums Victoria initiative and its 'Grandmothers' Project'.

Today includes three things that I hold very dear: multiculturalism, collaboration and ... grandmothers.

No-one here needs convincing that we live in a multi-cultural state.

We Victorians are diverse: coming from over 200 different ethnic backgrounds and 130 different religious groups.

Like almost half of all Victorians, I had one parent born overseas.

That means that I have always reflected on the fact that we are made up of many different people.

I have always been conscious of how difficult it must have been for my father – as for millions of others – to leave his country of birth and settle well in another.

It has made me particularly aware of the need for us all to do whatever we can, to ensure that we are welcoming to newcomers, and that we all do what we can to ensure that we live harmoniously with each other.

That need was programmed into me by my father at an early age. Like so many others, he found Australia to be a place of safe refuge, democracy, fairness and opportunity for his family. We were left in no doubt that we must always protect and promote those values.

In that light, how lucky are we in Victoria to have your museums that specifically celebrate Chinese, Hellenic, Islamic, Italian and Jewish culture and heritage.

And how particularly fortunate are we that these five museums – each terrific in their own right – have now joined together in this Multicultural Museums Victoria (MMV) alliance, to showcase our State's rich multicultural history.

We are fortunate to have leaders who see that, through collaboration, what each museum contributes to the cultural, social and economic life of our community, can be amplified.

And, how clever to choose 'grandmothers' as a vehicle to tell the museums' separate and combined stories.

There is a special place for grandmothers in every culture. In each, they are regarded with respect and affection. And in each, they provide help, care, education and sage-advice.

This is something I know well – from several different perspectives.

I know the warmth of a grandmother's embrace as a child. The memories for me are of viyella sheets when I slept over at my nana's in winter, and hot chocolate with melting marshmallows....a treat that I would never have been allowed at home.

Then I watched with joy as my children were adored by, and they in turn adored their grandmother.

She had what must have seemed like endless time for them, when we were so busy, creating a home and careers, or recovering from sleepless nights.

And in turn, when she was elderly and frail, our children seemed to have endless time for her, as they called in to change the batteries on her TV remote, or to learn her recipes of their favourite dishes or just to have a sandwich and a chat.

I would like to tell you that I know of grandmothers now from the perspective of being one. Unfortunately, that is not the case, although I am working on it, even if my children are not (yet!)

But I do know too – much more broadly – the role of grandmothers, from my many years as a judge in the Family Court of Australia.

I know how they step in when parents cannot care for their children. How they put their own lives on hold when it helps a son or daughter back into the workforce. How they often step in

during those early days when parenting can just feel overwhelming or, how they can create a safe place for a child.

And so, through grandmas and grannies, nanas and nonnas, ya-yas and lao laos, bubbes and jaddas, we have a universal symbol by which we can tell the stories of and celebrate our multiculturalism here in Victoria.

What I need to do today is to say ‘thank you.’

Thank you to Ms Rebecca Forgasz, Director and CEO of the Jewish Museum for her leadership in coordinating this project along with the Chairs and the CEOs of the five multicultural museums of Victoria.

Thank you to the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the commitment and enthusiasm of its Chair, Helen Kapalos.

Thank you to all the generous donors and sponsors. A very particular thanks to the Gandel family, whose contribution to this Project has ensured that it has been able to happen.

What I love about this first MMV project is that we see each museum approach the same topic differently. But, although the exhibitions are resonant of the distinct features of each culture, they are bound by the overarching theme of the love for, and love of, a grandmother.

What a perfect metaphor for our diverse community in Victoria. We can recognise and celebrate the differences between us, but with an overarching theme of respect and affection.

It is my pleasure now to officially launch the Multicultural Museums Victoria initiative and its ‘Grandmothers’ Project’.