



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

UNITY CUP RUMBALARA FOOTBALL CLUB

Saturday 21 July, 2018

Ms Susanna Sheed MP, Member for Shepparton

The Honourable Wendy Lovell MP, Member for Northern Victoria

Cr Kim O'Keefe, Mayor, City of Greater Shepparton

Mr Paul Briggs, President, Rumbalara Football Netball Club

Mr Jeff Jacobson, President, Congupna Football and Netball Club

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta people, and I wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners. I'd also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present and to the Elders here with us this afternoon.

As the Rumbalara Football Netball Club's Patron and Number 1 ticket holder, I am delighted to join here today for the Unity Cup.

My husband Tony, like me, both an Essendon and a Rumbalara supporter, is every bit as happy that we are with you once again.

My role as the Governor of Victoria takes us to all parts of our State and enables us to meet people from all walks of life. We talk to people from a range of institutions, businesses and organisations that enrich our community in so many different ways.

Rumbalara was already well known to us before I was Governor. But now I am especially well placed to say that the Rumbalara Football Netball Club is a terrific example of a community organisation that changes attitudes and transforms lives.

We all know that sport is the perfect vehicle by which to foster physical and mental well-being, to promote a sense of belonging, and to build a strong community.

But we have always admired the fact that Rumbalara is, of course, so much more than just a sporting club.

More than just a sporting club, first because you involve hundreds of Indigenous participants and you have, for more than 20 years now, nurtured reconciliation and well-being for the Goulburn Valley's Aboriginal community.

And more than just a sporting club, because many hundreds of young people - perhaps thousands by now - have been able to enjoy a safe environment in which to discuss health, employment and social issues.

But you all know the Rumbalara story - the hard work by so many, and the achievements - better than anyone. So, let me just highlight a few stand-out achievements from an outsider's perspective.

I love the fact that you have been ahead of the curve when it comes to equality and respect for girls and women.

Netball and football are equally supported and championed.

And, added to the mix this year is the first Rumbalara Women's AFL team - the only all Aboriginal women's team in the State. (Congratulations to Lisa Thorpe, by the way, in her leadership of that process).

You have also been active proponents of social inclusion: of the common interests between Indigenous and non-Indigenous clubs, and of the need to welcome and enjoy a harmonious connection with the diverse range of people in the region.

In this respect, both Rumbalara and Congupna deserve the heartiest congratulations for this, the 12th Unity Cup.

What a great feeling it was, walking together, celebrating the significance of women in the community, and in families. It is important to acknowledge women and the roles we play in families as grandmothers, mothers, aunts and sisters, and in the community, with the growing recognition that this half of our talent pool must be allowed to flourish, in order to ensure the greatest prosperity and success for our State.

You won't be surprised to hear that this message especially strikes a chord with me, and it resonates so well on the heels of the NAIDOC theme: *because of her we can*, and the wonderful tributes to smart and strong women that it evoked.

I know there are many people to acknowledge and congratulate on all the great work with young people not only in Rumbalara, but also Congupna, and more broadly across the Shepparton and Goulburn Valley communities.

As perilous as it is, may I single out Paul Briggs (and his wife Kaye) and thank them for their leadership over many years in this region, at this Club and in the Kaiela Institute.

Finally, I'd like to thank you for your warm hospitality today and we wish both the Rumbalara and Congupna teams the best of luck.