



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **WOMEN AND HEALTH BREAKFAST SERIES**

**Friday 24 August, 2018**

**Ms Gabrielle Williams MP**, Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers

**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 here with us this morning.

Tony and I are so pleased to welcome you to Government House, and to this Women's Health breakfast. Thank you for being bold enough to start the day so early with us.

This breakfast is one of a series that we are hosting this year on health. We recently hosted a panel on men's health, and shortly we will hold a breakfast to discuss mental health.

It is our ambition that, through this series, we can gather people from different parts of the community, to facilitate important public conversations. And that we can continue to open Government House to Victorians from all walks of life.

And so, to women's health.

It is an ambitiously large topic. Such a large topic in fact, that I simply want to confine my brief introductory comments to the recognition that we need to encourage confidence in women to stay active and fit, as an important foundation to their overall health.

We will hear more of this later from our expert panel, but I want to emphasise that we know well that women participate less than men in physical activity and sport.

Half of all Australian women don't exercise at all, and one in five women do no physical exercise in a typical week.

There are so many reasons for that.

Household and family commitments can give just some context to why it can be difficult for busy women to prioritise their own health and wellbeing through exercise.

I take heart from the fact that more than 60% of Victorian women say that they **want** to be more physically active.

But we know women often feel embarrassed, exercising in public.

So, there are some social obstacles to overcome: time constraints, and a distorted image of what exercise, (and even what we wear to exercise), should look like.

And that's exactly why the VicHealth *This Girl Can* campaign has struck a chord with me. It's all about encouraging women to get out and get active. To overcome any perceived judgment about outfits, about skill level, and stereotypes about women's bodies.

This is just one area of great progress. There are many others.

Forgive my bias, as a former AFL Commissioner, for mentioning women's footy. Of course, it's by no means the only sporting activity open to women. But I love what it has added to a footy mad State: that it has proven to be an additional way to help 'normalise' the idea of girls and women being as active as boys and men.

These and other aspects of women's health will be discussed this morning by our outstanding panel of experts, who will be introduced to you shortly by our moderator, well-known broadcaster and writer, led by Ms Libbi Gorr.

We thank CEO Jerril Rechter and the staff at VicHealth for their support for this initiative, as well as all the work they do every day of the year to support women's health.

In fact, this is an opportunity for us to say 'thank you' to everyone in the room who is dedicated to ensuring that this half, (or a fraction more), of our population can stay healthy and productive.

Now, please, enjoy our hospitality here at Government House. And we look forward to speaking to as many of you as we can shortly.