



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

MELBOURNE CUP EVE RECEPTION

Monday 5 November, 2018

The Honourable Martin Pakula MP, Attorney General and Minister for Racing

The Honourable Bruce Atkinson MLC, President of the Legislative Council and **Mrs Libby Atkinson**

Lady Murray

The Honourable Sir James Gobbo AC CVO QC and **Lady Gobbo**

The Honourable Ted Baillieu, Former Premier of Victoria and **Mrs Robyn Baillieu**

Mrs Amanda Elliott, Chairman, Victoria Racing Club and members of the VRC Committee

Mr Neil Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Victoria Racing Club and **Mrs Stephanie Wilson**

Distinguished guests

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 evening.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you all to the 2018 Melbourne Cup Eve Reception, most particularly all those who have travelled great distances to join us.

In this role, and in this magnificent House, I often talk of the need to respect history and tradition, whilst ensuring that our work has contemporary significance.

This is a theme that particularly resonates with our historic – indeed, iconic – Melbourne Cup and, specifically, when it comes to its celebration here at Government House.

History tells us that, since 1861, the Melbourne Cup has been a beloved part of Melbourne's sporting and social scene.

It was the first of the major sporting events for which Melbourne is today renowned: joined over the years by not only other horseraces of importance, but by large-scale cricket and football calendars, the Australian Open Grand Slam tennis and Formula One Grand Prix, amongst our many other major events.

Even from its early days, the Melbourne Cup drew huge crowds. We know that in 1880, at a time when Melbourne's population was only 290,000 people, 100,000 of them – more than a third – made the journey to Flemington to attend the Cup.

Many visitors came from the country, and from other colonies too. Flemington was obviously 'the place to be'. Apparently, there was widespread 'fear of missing out' even before 'FOMO' was recognised as a sort of 'condition'!

It was the *place to be* for the Governor of Victoria too.

Way back in 1884, Victoria's 5th Governor, Lord Normanby, wrote to his successor, Sir Henry Loch, warning him that '....For a Governor not to attend the Flemington Races....' would be '....a kind of High Treason'. [I don't want to be guilty of treason and so I look forward to attending tomorrow!]

The history of Government House informs us of a week-long round of parties here – some for up to 3,000 guests, and large numbers of houseguests – frequently, amongst them, the Governors of the other States, their wives, often their daughters, (interestingly, no mention of their sons!), and their staff.

The Governor still attends the Melbourne Cup. It remains an important event for Victoria.

And, each year, we still celebrate the Cup here at Government House.

However, times have of course changed.

Today, we not only welcome visitors from other parts of Australia, but we are delighted to be joined by many international guests, with whom we share comity in racing, and in trade and investment related to the racing sector.

In that same vein, we and are proud to welcome and celebrate all those who contribute so much to every aspect of racing in Victoria. We are particularly pleased to know that, amongst us, there are some who have never before visited Government House. A particularly warm welcome to you.

And, in this modern era, we celebrate the Melbourne Cup as a part of a carnival that attracts 330,000 people each year, and provides nearly \$450 million in gross economic benefit to our State.

I acknowledge the VRC for its excellent staging of the Spring Racing Carnival, the leadership of Chairman, Amanda Elliott and the Committee, and the enormous work of CEO Neil Wilson and his team.

That leaves me with only one remaining task: the hardest part of my comments this evening.

I must fulfil my historic duty to tip the Melbourne Cup winner. If only I hadn't succeeded in my first year in office, the pressure would not be so daunting.

I'm going for Marmelo. I like his trainer, his jockey, his barrier-draw and I like his overseas preparation.

The tradition goes further. Ministers for Racing have also always offered a tip at this event. The Minister tells me that he fancies Magic Circle.

I advise that 'no correspondence will be entered into' with any unhappy punters at this time tomorrow!

So please relax now, and enjoy the excitement of Cup Eve in Melbourne.