



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

PROBUS CLUB OF MELBOURNE GUESTS' LUNCH

Thursday 15 November 2018

Mr John Wilson, President Melbourne Probus

Mr Jack Smorgon, Vice President Melbourne Probus

Mr Tony Joubert, President Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club

Mr Stewart Fenton, Chief Executive officer, Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club

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 afternoon.

Tony and I are delighted to join you today, and I am particularly pleased for the opportunity to chat about a topic that I hope will be of mutual interest – that is, some of the wonderful aspects of life in our State, from the Governor's perspective.

Tony and I are both Victorian born and bred, so when I became Governor of Victoria, we thought we knew our State well.

After more than three years in the role now, we realise that we have a particularly privileged perspective from which to see and learn more about what is happening around us in this rapidly growing part of Australia.

I wonder if, like many others, you are not absolutely certain about the Governor's role, so let me start by briefly describing that to you.

There are four main parts to this role, representing our Head of State, Her Majesty the Queen.

There are the constitutional obligations and ceremonial duties, the community engagement and the international engagement.

The **constitutional** obligations include overseeing a seamless transition of power following an election, chairing the Executive Council and giving Royal Assent to Bills when they have been passed by both Houses of Parliament.

The **ceremonial** commitments include swearing in Supreme Court judges, leading the community on large civic occasions such as Remembrance Day and Australia Day, and presiding at investitures for Order of Australia and other official award ceremonies.

The **community** engagement aspect involves congratulating, celebrating and championing the good work and good people of our State. It is important to bring together Victorians as an inclusive and harmonious community, and to celebrate our considerable strengths.

And the final part of the role involves **international engagement**. We host international delegations, meet with Ambassadors and Consuls and represent the State overseas, advancing Victoria's economic, social and cultural interests. Making connections with other nations.

And so it is through the lens of this role that I have chosen several areas of our work that I hope you might find of interest.

I mentioned that this is a rapidly growing part of Australia. So, let me start there.

Victoria is growing fast. Right now, our population is around 6.5 million, with 5 million people living in Melbourne.

An interesting sidebar is that although this growth is rapid, it is not unprecedented for our State. In the decade between 1851 and 1861, our population grew some 2000% from 25,000 to 600,000, thanks of course to the Gold Rush.

In any event, nearly half of the fastest growing Local Government Areas in Australia are in Victoria, and Melbourne is witnessing the steepest growth amongst the capital cities. It is predicted that within the next decade or so, Melbourne will be bigger than Sydney.

It is interesting to hear the statistics, but in many instances, you can probably just 'feel' the growth, and we all experience the effects of the massive infrastructure program that will help us meet future needs.

Amongst our expanding population, we have a particularly diverse community.

More than a quarter of us were born overseas. And almost a half of us have at least one parent born overseas.

We Victorians come from around 200 different national backgrounds and 130 different faith groups. We speak 260 different languages and dialects, and more than a quarter of us speak a language other than English at home.

Our cultural mix is changing. Recently, the three largest groups of new Victorians to join our ranks have been from India and China, as well as from the UK.

We have been extraordinarily successful in celebrating our diversity. We appreciate both the differences that we can celebrate and all that we share in common with each other, regardless of birthplace, race or religion.

Our diversity is indeed one of our great strengths. Different people bring different perspectives and enrich our opinions and decision-making.

But the harmony and unity that we so value in our community is always a work in progress. We must be vigilant to ensure that we are inclusive. That we do more than just co-exist: but that we interact with mutual respect and understanding.

And, as recent events have again proven, we must ensure that we are not tempted by fear to blame every person from the same ethnic or religious background as the perpetrator of a wicked act of terror as we saw last week.

When it comes to women and inclusiveness, we know that things are changing. However, we must still count many successes for women in small numbers.

Single digits often. Australia has had just one female Governor-General. One female Prime Minister. Victoria has had one female Governor, one female Premier and one female Chief Commissioner of Police.

We know that at the helm of our ASX 200 companies we have less women than men named John. According to statistics from 2017, there were 32 'Johns' leading Australia's largest companies, while there were only 19 women (of any name) in such roles.

Victoria's gender pay gap is 12.2 per cent. It is better than the overall Australian gender pay gap, but it still means that on average women earn around \$200 less per week than their male counterparts.

Last year, according to the World Economic Forum, our nation was ranked 35th (out of 144 countries) for gender equality. We rank behind a number of European, African and South American nations.

If the world follows its present rate of progress, it will take 100 years to close this global gender gap.

And so, although it is pleasing to see changes, it is disappointing to see a rate of change that is glacial. Many of the inequities being highlighted by the leaders of the Women's Movement in the 1960's – just before I was leaving school – remain.

Fifty years on, and women are still under-represented in leadership roles and prestigious careers, still paid less than men, and still the victims of a disproportionate amount of violence compared to men, particularly in what should be the safe haven of their homes.

We need to keep working in this area for the sake of our sons and our daughters, so that they might all have the benefit of 100% of our talent pool being productive contributors to our economy and our community, as well as living safely.

As in many other places, to ensure a prosperous economy, Victoria has had to transition from traditional to advanced manufacturing.

Traditional ways of manufacturing, delivering services, caring for the education or health of our people, or farming our land, will simply not cut it without innovation in all our practices.

We have had to be clever. And we have had to be innovative.

Before I go further, may I divert to say a quick word about innovation.

Too often, I think, we stereotype innovation and innovators.

Those words in themselves can conjure a picture to us of young hipsters in T-shirts, devising the next disruptor around a ping-pong table at work, with a computer in one hand and a green juice in the other.

The joy of the innovation that we see in Victoria is that it is a mindset that is permeating both the new, disruptive businesses, but also 'old business' as well. Innovation is not just about a new business or sector, but about the processes we set in place in all that we do. It is also not just confined to our cities.

Mind you, creative thinking is nothing new to us in this State. Without the vast natural resources of some States, Victoria has always had to rely on knowledge and innovation to prosper.

The nation's major research institute, the CSIRO, was founded in Melbourne, as was the global vaccine and bioscience behemoth, CSL. The Cochlear Implant derives from here. We have the nation's first and only synchrotron and the world's first commercial 3D bioprinter.

I shall return to the strength of our biomedical sector in a moment.

We see innovation very strongly in our farming sector. Satellite technology tells farmers when to water or what to add to the soil. Cattle can be managed with virtual fencing. Real-time data helps farmers to meet market demands while reducing wastage.

Thanks to our clever farming techniques, although Victoria represents only 3% of our arable land, we produce 27% of the nation's food and fibre exports. And we are home to some of Australia's best agritech research institutes.

We see innovation too in newer industries: in defence and cyber-tech. In the technology and equipment that we create for the mining industry. And in the world-class digital games that we produce. That is just to name some of the sectors in which we are rapidly growing our strengths.

You know, when it comes to innovation, we are supported by both wonderful academic and technical institutions.

Our ten universities are outstanding, placed highly in various of the ranking tables, and we can be especially proud to have two universities in the world's top 100, to have three universities in the top 50 young universities table, and to have two universities in the top 30 biomedical rankings, the latter on par with London and Boston.

And our network of technical and vocational colleges is also recognised as outstanding, as we often hear in the course of our official visits on behalf of the State.

One sector of which you can be particularly proud is the life-sciences and biomedical sector. The Melbourne Biomedical Precinct is made up of over 40 hospitals, medical research institutes, biotechnology organisations and universities co-located to the north of Melbourne's CBD. It employs tens of thousands of people, and educates more than 7,000 students each year.

There are many examples of great research that comes from Melbourne.

Researchers at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the University of Melbourne have created a new device giving people with spinal cord injuries new hope to walk again.

Monash University is bringing together the world's best minds to address the global burden of mosquito borne diseases, such as Zika and Dengue Fever.

The Doherty Institute has undertaken breakthrough research that could lead to the development of a one-off universal flu vaccine shot.

Victoria is proud to have been chosen as the national headquarters of the Medtech Actuator Program, Australia's pre-eminent industry-led incubator, that provides start-ups with a range of services and resources to assist in product design and development, clinical trials, intellectual property, commercialisation strategy and finance.

Talking of the biomedical sector, takes me to two observations.

The first is about collaboration.

I have been astounded by the amount of collaboration between people, organisations, states and then nations, particularly in scientific endeavours.

You may not be surprised by it. In fact, you may be more surprised that I am surprised!

Is it just that I spent my professional life in a courtroom, I wonder, that I have understood an adversarial more than a collaborative approach to difficult issues? I am not sure. It might just be that an abundance of opportunities for collaborations particularly reside in the sciences.

It seems that our eminent researchers know that the biggest conundrums will be more readily answered by combining the expertise from the best brains.

We also see fantastic partnerships between universities and industry. For example Swinburne's partnerships with Metro and Newcrest offer hands on industry placements for the next generation of, respectively, railway engineers, and IT analysts.

The second observation I wanted to make is about STEM. Science, technology, engineering and maths.

Simply put, we need more people trained in these fields. We do not have enough students in the pipeline. We need them in order to prosper. We need girls as well as boys. We cannot afford to lose the prospect of half of our talent pool.

Currently, only 13 per cent of undergraduates in STEM fields are women. It is becoming clear to industries that this will limit the pipeline and curtail the ability of companies and employers to attract the brightest people.

We are justifiably proud when we talk of Melbourne as one of the world's most liveable cities. And it is quite an accolade that, since the Economist Intelligence Unit's liveability survey started, Melbourne has always ranked in the top 3 cities, and for 7 of those years consecutively, as the world 'number one'.

There are so many reasons for our liveability, including our superb urban planning and design: both recognised as great strengths. For example, next month, Melbourne will be the featured partner city at the Hong Kong Business of Design Week, following countries or cities such as Sweden, Chicago, Barcelona and Italy. Not bad company!

But a very significant feature is, without doubt, our abundant schedule of arts and major sporting events.

Around 350,000 people just attended our Spring Racing Carnival, and we expect more than 700,000 at the Australian Open tennis in less than 2 months. That is, following upon massive crowds through the AFL Season and finals, and before the crowds for the Boxing Day Test against India, the Grand Prix, and the World Cup Golf to be played in Melbourne next year.

At the same time, our National Gallery of Victoria is the 16th most visited gallery anywhere in the world, and whether it is showing the MOMA exhibition, masterpieces from the Hermitage or Monet, or the triennial of contemporary art, it is little wonder.

It's not just the visual arts, of course. Victoria is designed as a UNESCO city of literature. Our magnificent State Library is also one of the world's most visited libraries. Our Melbourne International Film Festival one of the world's oldest. Our Comedy Festival one of the world's most acclaimed.

And, we have secured a string of major musicals, (such as Harry Potter....as the first city outside London and New York), so that we can truly show that we are the leader in the region for such performing arts.

The last thing I want to highlight to you about Victoria is something that needs to be shared and celebrated.

If, like us, you settle each evening, (or in reality late at night), to watch some news, I wonder if you ever feel concerned about everything that's going wrong in the world.

But what we are lucky enough to see in florid detail as we traverse the State, is something that is not always as readily apparent in our daily news. And that is extreme goodness. Pure kindness. Altruism and care for others that, quite simply, helps to make Victoria the best place it can be.

Last month, when I invested our 2019 Victorian Australians of the Year, I was again heartened by the leaders that we have in our communities.

Leaders like, Dr Sky Kinder, the Young Victorian of the Year, who is a dedicated advocate to ensure that those who live in regional Victoria are not disadvantaged compared to their city cousins, when it comes to healthcare.

And the Senior Victorian of the Year, 88 year old Alison Harcourt – a woman well before her time working across many decades in mathematics and statistics

And of course, the Victorian of the Year Mark Sullivan, who is the founder and managing director of not-for-profit Medicines Development for Global Health, which develops medicine to target diseases affecting some of the world poorest people.

These three Victorians, are just examples of the great work that helps make Victoria a better place to live.

Perfect fairness, equality, harmony and inclusion will always be a work in progress. We each bear a responsibility to contribute.

You have experienced the many joys and benefits of being in a dedicated and committed community. The Probus Club rallies people together under the banners of friendship, fellowship and fun.

I commend everyone here for your engagement with your broader community.

In particular, your curiosity and thirst to continue learning really does help to make Victoria stronger. It means that our State can continue to pursue the 'Peace and Prosperity' of its State motto well into the future.