



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

**DESSAU HOUSE RECEPTION**  
**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Staff, Students,

Let me start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering and by paying my respects to elders past and present.

Let me also start by welcoming you all to Government House Victoria.

I was very keen to host you here. For several reasons.

The first, and obvious one, is that we do share a name in common. I am very proud of the naming of Dessau House.

How could I not feel proud? Dessau House is in the company of Houses named for two Prime Ministers in Menzies and Holt, and one of our finest indigenous leaders, in Oscar.

But I wanted to welcome you here today because we share so much more than a name.

Like you, I have a deep respect and affection for Wesley College and what it stands for.

It is an old school with a contemporary outlook.

Obviously enough, it looks different today from when it started more than 150 years ago. It has more campuses, modern buildings, girls as well as boys and subjects that could not even have been conceived of then.

But the fundamental ethos is still the same. The College fosters the academic achievements of all its students, while it also celebrates their broader individual talents. It is an open school, committed to the richness of cultural diversity, social justice and caring for the emotional and social well-being of everyone in its community.

Funnily enough, I prepared these brief comments about the school before I discovered that the College's chosen theme for this year is 'change and continuity'. I like that theme very much.

Anyway, we have been particularly keen for you to visit Government House while we are here. I hope the name of your House will far outlast my time as the Governor of Victoria. But it is a joy for us to be able to welcome you to this magnificent State House, and to briefly explain the Governor's role to you.

The Governor represents the Queen as the Head of State in Victoria.

First, the obligation of the Governor is to oversee the workings of the government of the day to ensure that it acts within the boundaries of the Victorian Constitution and the rule of law. That means that the Governor must be apolitical and impartial. In fact, the Governor cannot vote in State elections.

Secondly, the Governor performs a ceremonial role, for example attending ANZAC Day, swearing in Ministers and Supreme Court judges and presiding at investitures for Australian honours.

A significant part of the Governor's role is in community engagement, encouraging unity, mutual respect and achievement in every single field of endeavour across our State.

And in the modern era, an important fourth part of the role is international engagement. In a global environment, it is essential that Victoria's international economic, social and cultural interests are promoted both at home and abroad.

May I emphasise that in wanting you to join us here at Government House, we didn't want you to visit 'just sometime'.

We particularly wanted you to visit Government House this morning.

Why do you think we chose today? Why do you think that Tony and I felt it was important for you to visit us on 8 March?

Of course, because this date marks International Women's Day.

This is the day when you - the young women and men of our future - can ponder what it means for this country, for the world and for your futures, if the gender inequality that still pervades our globe does not improve.

I put it like that because, if it persists, a lack of parity will, unfortunately, cause a very significant deficiency in the prosperity and the richness of all your lives.

This is not a 'women's issue'. It is an issue that will hold you all back. You simply can't reach your potential if your community does not equally reflect all of its citizens, if half of you are subject to more violence, less income and a lower level of respect than others, and if you cannot draw on your full pool of talent.

If Australia continues to rank 39 out of 144 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index, and if, as the World Economic Forum projects, women will have to wait another 108 years for gender equality, then you will all be significantly the poorer.

Let me leave you with that thought, and with the promise that you can now relax and enjoy your time here with us.