



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS PLUS RECEPTION**

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019**

**Mr Tim Richardson MP**, Parliamentary Secretary for Schools, representing the Honourable James Merlino MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education

**Mr Angus James**, Chairman, and **Board Members**, Australian Schools Plus

**Ms Rosemary Conn**, CEO, and **staff** of Australian Schools Plus

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

**Students**

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.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you to Government House this evening to celebrate the work being done by Australian Schools Plus.

It brings together two things that, as Governor, I know – I see – are central to the success of Victoria: education and philanthropy.

Victoria is the ‘Education state’, so we well understand the transformative effect of education as a means of underpinning Victoria’s prosperity.

But we also understand that, as a community, we are only as strong as our most disadvantaged members. Or, at least, we are significantly stronger the more equitably the opportunities are extended.

Of course, education provides the most potent of opportunities for a young person's future.

Schools Plus, born of the Gonski Review, recognises the role of education in moving young people out of disadvantage.

It also recognises the extraordinary generosity that resides in our community.

Our State has always prospered from philanthropy.

Melbourne's first philanthropic society was established in 1848, before the Colony of Victoria had even been created. It was soon followed by numerous secular and non-secular groups that helped to establish hospitals, orphanages, female rescue homes, aged care institutions, ladies' benevolent societies and services for people with disabilities.

The Gold Rush then saw much acquired wealth, matched with an equal abundance of generosity, that helped to build 'Marvellous Melbourne' including institutions like RMIT, The University of Melbourne, the Austin Hospital and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Today, we prosper from the fine philanthropists who offer not only the funds to underpin important projects and programs, but also their vision and wisdom.

Since 2015 philanthropy, alongside federal bi-partisan support, has ensured that Schools Plus has added more than \$13 million to assist more than 550 school projects across Australia - benefitting almost 150,000 students.

In Victoria, more than \$1.8 million has been directed to help some 20,000 students in over 100 of the most disadvantaged schools.

Schools and teachers have been enabled to give students extra support, or to trial new ways to improve learning through programs addressing resilience and mental health, and engagement through sport, leadership and technology literacy.

I particularly applaud the initiative shown by Schools Plus in supporting the educators.

It can be proud of its role in establishing the Commonwealth Bank National Teaching Awards that recognise and celebrate excellence in teaching and school leadership. And its program of intensive coaching to develop the capacity of school leaders to better engage families and communities in student learning.

To the supporters and philanthropists in the room this evening, we offer the heartiest thanks.

I am pleased for this opportunity too to commend the vision of your Board, under the leadership of Chairman Angus James, and the hard work of your staff, led by CEO, Rosemary Conn.

To the teachers, some of whom are here this evening, we thank you for your dedication within and outside of the classroom. Many of you lead fundraising initiatives in your own communities, work which is undertaken above and beyond your regular teaching duties.

I know too that we have a small group of students with us, who are beneficiaries of the Schools Plus programs. Congratulations to each one of you emerging leaders. We look forward to chatting to you shortly and hearing about your experiences of various Schools Plus programs.

Your presence here gives us the sharpest reminder that there is no more worthwhile investment than in a young person.

Thank you to Schools Plus for bolstering our future in the best and kindest of ways.