



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

BIOMELBOURNE NETWORK WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Tuesday 9th April, 2019

The Honourable Martin Pakula MP, Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade

Mrs Lusia Guthrie, Chair, BioMelbourne Network and members of the Board

Award nominees

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.

My first contact with the BioMelbourne Network Women in Leadership Awards was in 2016, early in my time as the Governor.

Having come from the law and having been, like many women of my era, channelled into humanities from an early age, your Awards lunch was one that helped ignite in me some strong views on women and science.

I have since participated in another of your Awards events. And so, the opportunity to host these awards here this year is a pleasure.

I am delighted to welcome you all to Government House.

Now, I know that yours is not a group to whom I need to advocate the importance of science. You are not only well ahead of me in that view, but you are also living the importance of it everyday.

But you will trust that, although I have only relatively recently come to appreciate some of the precise issues for women in your professions, gender parity in itself is certainly not a new topic to me.

Of course, across my career, I have seen many changes that can encourage optimism in us all.

The fact, however, that on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Index, Australia currently ranks 39th out of 144 countries, that pay disparity between men and women still stands at 14.1%, (happily, significantly better in Victoria at 9.3%), and that at least one Australian woman dies each week from family violence, means that we are still a long way from parity.

All this forms the backdrop to our need to champion women in every field of endeavour.

But we cannot afford to keep celebrating the achievements of women in just ones: for example, one Prime Minister, one Governor-General, one Victorian Premier or one Governor.

Yes, women succeed in every field of endeavour, including in the sciences and in biotech, medtech, pharmaceuticals and health innovation. But we are still well short of enabling the whole of our talent pool to reach their potential.

To our detriment.

It is important in every sector. But your sector is of particular significance to Victoria. It is one of our recognised strengths.

You know the statistics better than I do. We are renowned for our universities, with the University of Melbourne and Monash University ranked highly in the biosciences. And with a wealth of leading research institutes and of course companies, such as CSL and Cochlear, amongst very many more.

And so, I applaud these awards.

Let's keep honouring the women who have made outstanding contributions to advance their industries and innovation.

Let's profile them so that young girls can aspire to be them, and so that everyone can appreciate that their strengths and talents are just part of the normal landscape of success.

And let's highlight the particular issues for women in science. Their special needs at certain times in their careers, whether due to family, or responsibilities or partnerships that make it hard to pursue research overseas.

May I take this opportunity to thank Mrs Lusia Gutherie, Chair and members of the Board of the BioMelbourne Network for their hard work and outstanding vision. And thank you too, to the judges who have had the difficult task in selecting this year's recipients from a record number of entries.

Congratulations to each nominee and each award recipient.

I look forward to presenting the awards in a few moments.

But I would now like in to invite the Honourable Martin Pakula MP to address us.