



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE OPENING OF THE
RESTORATION OF THE OLD QUADRANGLE**

Thursday 2nd May 2019

Mr Allan Myers AC QC, Chancellor, and Members of the University Council

Professor Duncan Maskell, Vice-Chancellor, and Former Vice-Chancellors

Professor Su Baker AM, Pro Vice-Chancellor Engagement

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 Elders here today. In particular Aunty Di for her warm welcome to country.

And might I say that although in this newly refurbished space I can't help but reflect on aspects of the history of this State and this University, standing amidst these beautiful works of artist, Maree Clark, I am mindful of the compelling link to the heritage of the land on which this building stands.

In about March 1970, I was interviewed for Farrago. I was asked what I thought of 'O Week'. I think I said something like I found it 'tiresome'.

I am sure I meant that it was 'tiring', rather than 'tiresome'. But I made a mistake. I used the wrong word. A hard admission to make, for someone who has since spent a career crafting affidavits, judgments and speeches. Still, a better explanation than that I was so world weary at that young age, that I had found what was probably the most exciting week of my life until then, in any way tedious or boring.

Well, much of what was tiring – actually exhausting – had probably taken place right here. In this Old Quadrangle and in this building.

In fact, this part of the University was pretty much the centre of my universe for a full four years.

It was in the south western corner over there that I attended the Secretary's Office to advocate my cause to be accepted into Law, although a little shy of the required minimum age.

It was under the arches alongside this wing that we walked back and forth to lectures.

And the view of the Quadrangle from the Law Library in this wing was my constant companion, the Library being where we met, where we chatted, exchanged ideas, made new friendships and – occasionally – studied.

Perhaps I should explain something to any younger people gathered here. In the 'olden days', we actually attended lectures. Not only that, we mostly spent all day here! Novel to later generations, I know.

This afternoon we can reflect on how special this Old Quadrangle is to the history of this University, but also more broadly as a touchstone of our State's history.

It reflects the surge of wealth and the status of our fledgling city, in the early 1850's.

A period of dramatic change – when the enthusiasm for our rich seams of gold saw Victoria's population increase almost six-fold from a little under 100,000 to 540,000 - in just a decade. When multiculturalism took root. And when Melbourne became one of the world's largest and wealthiest cities.

A period when the vision and leadership of Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe and a band of civic minded leaders saw the founding of many institutions, including our museum, the Melbourne Hospital and the Royal Botanic Gardens, as well as this University. And a building surge, which included the building of our first Flinders Street Station and our State Library as well as this magnificent Quadrangle.

And so it is that the history of the University runs parallel to the modern history of our State. And in turn, the history of this Quadrangle runs parallel to the history of the University. Of course it does. It was, after all, the first building here.

Construction started in 1854, soon after the University was founded. (Interestingly, it was also the first university building commenced in Australia).

When just built, it accommodated the University's first professorial residences, teaching spaces, meeting venues and library. It was, and is now restored, as the heart of the University.

Today, visitors will be welcomed by the stunning stained glass windows, crafted by Tom Nicholson and Geoffrey Wallace.

The north annexe will now accommodate a function space, and the University library has been restored to its former glory.

Key cultural, civic and ceremonial activities will take place here, as they did once before.

Now though, the Treasury, where we stand this afternoon, has been transformed into this beautiful exhibition space to be enjoyed not just by students and staff, but also by the public, furthering the University's cultural contribution to the wider community.

What a treat to enjoy this inaugural exhibition today.

Although times have changed and too many thousands of students and university staff to count have traversed the Old Quad since it was built, there is so much that has not changed, and will not change with this renovation.

I have no doubt that every student who treads the paths outside, or uses these wonderful new spaces, will be - just as I was - filled with the excitement of their future opportunities.

And I have no doubt that each staff member will be filled with pride for their contribution to the intellectual and economic prosperity that will follow for Victoria and well beyond, from their dedicated teaching and research.

And so I thank all those with the vision, leadership and skill to realise this project.

In particular, I am conscious that this was a project very dear to the heart of the erstwhile Vice-Chancellor, Professor Glyn Davis AC, and I am pleased to see him here today to see this vision realised.

It is a project that will ensure that, in accordance with its motto, the University of Melbourne will continue to grow in the esteem of future generations. And those future generations, comprised of our diverse community members, alongside those in search of a global education, will have their minds and lives expanded at Australia's top university.

It now gives me great pleasure to officially reopen the Old Quad as the ceremonial heart of the University of Melbourne.