



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY RECEPTION**

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019**

**Dr Lyn Roberts AO**, Acting CEO VicHealth

**Ms Sarah Harry**, Founder and Director of Body Positive Australia and This Girl Can Ambassador

**Distinguished guests, one and all**

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.

I am delighted to welcome you to Government House to celebrate International Yoga Day.

It is a pleasure to see you all here, and can I start by saying that I love yoga!

And although yoga's origin dates back to India some 5000 years ago, today it is practised in many forms that emphasise skills we can all call upon in our busy lives: calm breathing, postural alignment, core strength and relaxation.

And so I was keen to host an event to celebrate the practice of yoga, and there could be no better day to do that than today, 21 June.

Today is of course the Winter Solstice, but it is also the United Nations International Day of Yoga, aiming to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of yoga.

Perhaps you have noticed that you are amongst women only this morning.

Of course, yoga is not just the domain of women. Not by any means. But I wanted to use this opportunity to encourage women in our community to undertake recreational exercise, to ensure their physical, mental and spiritual best health.

We know that women often put themselves last: last behind partners or children, last behind relatives who need care or assistance, and/or last behind work and community responsibilities.

And we know that women can be turned off by exercise if they perceive it to be about the idealised version of the body beautiful. Or if it will take too much time. Or too much money. Or even if it means too much lycra!

Yoga is just one – in my view a really pleasurable one – of many health and fitness options. It is also one of Australia’s fastest-growing fitness activities.

Some 2 million Australians now do yoga. In less than 10 years, yoga has doubled in popularity, overtaking aerobics and many sports, including soccer, cricket, tennis, and golf.

This morning has been made possible by two impressive organisations.

One is VicHealth, that has brought to Victoria from England the powerful This Girl Can campaign, designed to encourage, motivate and inspire women to become more active.

In its first year, some 285,000 women have been encouraged to get active ‘no matter how well they do it, how they look or how sweaty they get’.

The other is ‘Body Positive Australia’, founded by Sarah Harry, who is also a This Girl Can Ambassador and your teacher this morning.

Sarah practises Body Positive Yoga, encouraging all of us to cater to the particular needs of our own bodies, and to feel comfortable in and less critical of our bodies.

And can I also thank those assisting Sarah this morning.

I look forward to chatting with you after the session. For now, let me say ‘Happy International Yoga Day’ and ‘Namaste’.