



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **NAIDOC WEEK 2019 RECEPTION**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

**Gavin Jennings MLC**, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

**The Hon Luke Donnellan MP**, Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers

**The Hon Peter Walsh MP**, Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

**Dr Samantha Ratnam**, Leader of the Victorian Greens

**Ms Jill Gallagher AO**, Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner

**Ms Stacie Piper**, Chairperson, Victorian NAIDOC Committee

**Mr Tim Kanoa**, Executive Director, Aboriginal Victoria

**Aunty Alice Kolasa and Aunty Dyan Summers**

**NAIDOC Award Winners**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering, thank the Aunties for their warm welcome to country, and pay my respects to Elders past and present and to the many Elders who are here with us this evening.

We are pleased for the opportunity to acknowledge those many elders who show wonderful leadership in their own communities and the wider community.

Time and time again, they teach us, by example, that although there is still much to reflect upon and to act upon for ground to be gained towards universal respect and reconciliation, there is also much mutual goodwill upon which we can build.

And for each step left to strive for – thanks to the efforts and achievements of so many – there is also much that we can celebrate.

And so, Tony and I are delighted to welcome each one of you this evening to Government House to celebrate NAIDOC week.

This event is particularly dear to us.

In 2015, the NAIDOC week reception was the first major event that we held here, within just a week or so of my swearing in as the Governor of the State.

It was important to us to show clearly that everyone is welcome here at Government House.

I hope that is something upon which we have built across the past four years.

Indeed, I hope that you noticed the flag-poles inside our gates.

They are an addition since NAIDOC was last celebrated at this House.

When the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Island flags were first raised there, I noted that this House stands on land that was nurtured and cared for by Indigenous people across many millennia. I said that it was not hard to imagine the hurt and chaos caused when Europeans arrived and that, as a community, we have struggled to find the ways to overcome it.

I spoke of the permanent inclusion of those flags at the gateway to Government House as a symbolic step. But an important one, because symbols matter.

That said, of course, symbols alone are insufficient.

Appropriately, this year's NAIDOC week theme incorporates not just the celebration of the rich history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but also steps to be taken for a shared future.

This year's theme of '*Voice. Treaty. Truth. Let's Work Together For a Shared Future*', is timely.

When it comes to *voice*, 2019 marks the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages.

We know that language is a powerful repository of identity, and cultural tradition. In this instance, giving true voice to the oldest continuous culture on the planet.

The NAIDOC theme is timely too, given the work being done in Victoria towards advancing Aboriginal self-determination and treaty.

Last year, Victoria passed Australia's first ever *treaty* legislation.

This year sees significant steps in this complex process.

I hope that the award-winning 'Deadly Questions' campaign will enhance that work, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians taking the opportunity to communicate openly with each other – in the words of the NAIDOC theme, to *work together on our shared future*.

May I congratulate and thank the Victorian NAIDOC Committee Chairperson, Stacie Piper, the committee members and all those – past and present – who have worked tirelessly to bring us NAIDOC week as we know it today.

Congratulations too to this year's Miss NAIDOC, Ms Yirgjhilya Lawrie, Mr NAIDOC, Mr Chris Saunders, and all the NAIDOC Award Winners.

In offering congratulations, it also gives me enormous pleasure to commend everyone connected with the ancient Budj Bim site having just been successfully added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

We have been lucky enough to visit there.

So much hard work has gone into that listing, and this recognition for Aboriginal cultural importance is a cause for great pride. And what perfect timing this week!

Finally, thank you to everyone in this room for the parts that you play - from many different organisations and perspectives - in our shared future, and we hope that you enjoy this evening's celebration of NAIDOC week.

May I now introduce Minister Jennings, to address us.