



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL OF MELBOURNE
AWARDS NIGHT**

Thursday 8th August 2019

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

The Honourable Gabrielle Williams MP, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Women and Youth

The Honourable Ted Baillieu, Former Premier of Victoria

Indian Consul General Raj Kumar and other members of the Consular Corps

Ms Mitu Bhowmick Lange, Artistic Director, Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, and

Distinguished guests, with a particularly warm welcome to our guests from India

I also 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 evening.

My husband Tony and I are so pleased to be with you for the opening of this year's Indian Film Festival of Melbourne.

And I am not just saying that to be a polite guest.

This evening features a number of things that are dear to us.

As the Governor of Victoria, I can say that any occasion that feeds our community's love of Indian culture, and draws together many of our Indian Victorians, is always a delight.

In our multicultural State, more than 230,000 people have Indian ancestry: the largest number of any State in Australia.

In just the last 10 years, more than 200,000 Indian students have studied here - again, more than in any other part of the country.

And each year, we welcome many thousands of visitors from India.

The close relationship between India and Victoria is based on these strong people to people and rich cultural connections.

We have experienced the close connections first-hand – here, and on two recent official visits to India.

Certainly, in Mumbai, we discussed the opportunities presented by our shared love of the arts, when we were fortunate to meet with a number of the people central to India's world-renowned film industry, including outstanding actor, producer and TV host, Amitabh Bachchan.

Here in Victoria we love film. We love a major event. And we love a Festival!

Our Melbourne International Film Festival is one of the oldest continuous film festivals in the world. And since the Indian Film Festival was first held here in 2010, Victorians have absolutely taken it to their hearts. It has become an entrenched and much loved part of our State's Festival calendar, as well as the greatest annual celebration of Indian cinema in the Southern Hemisphere.

I am particularly pleased that we can count amongst us in this State the indomitable Mitu Bhowmick Lange who, with her husband, has made Melbourne home.

Mitu, amongst your many successes in film production and distribution – including as the winner of the Victorian Government's 2017 Jill Robb Award in screen leadership – you can take great pride in how you have built this Festival.

As the Governor – but also as a friend and admirer – I thank you for what you have helped to add to our cultural scene, and for all that you have done to add to the warmth of the relationship between our countries.

Thank you too to your team, for the hard work that they have contributed to the growth and success of this Festival.

Finally, I admit that I am speaking as a fan, when I say what a delight it is to be surrounded by Bollywood ‘royalty’ this evening.

I sincerely welcome to Victoria all our guests from India, and say that we are particularly delighted to be joined by our chief guest, and ‘global phenomenon’, Shah Rukh Khan.

We hope that Mitu allows you all some time to enjoy our beautiful city and State: the cafes and restaurants, central city laneways, art galleries, the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground and our abundant wineries.

If she does not, then you must return! You will be welcome back here any time.

In the meantime, we wish you a wonderful 2019 Festival!