



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

HANOI - WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY SPEECH
Tuesday 1 October 2019

Tony and I are delighted to be here in Hanoi, and delighted to join you for this event.

The topic is dear to my heart.

Technology lies at the heart of our lives, and the ongoing prosperity for both Vietnam and Victoria.

And it will not surprise you to hear me say that such prosperity can never be fully realised unless we can draw upon 100% of our talent pool: that is, our women as well as our men.

Let me come back to that in just a moment!

This is our second day in Hanoi. Like so many other Australians and Victorians, we have been here before as tourists. This is our first official visit.

We are once again struck by the warmth of the welcome, the friendliness of the people and the beauty of the city and that gorgeous Lake.

But we are also struck by the development and vibrancy here, and it is clear that Victoria and Vietnam have much in common.

Some 190,000 Victorians have Vietnamese ancestry.

And more than 50,000 Vietnamese students have studied in Victoria in the last four years: more than in any other part of the country.

At a federal level, the Australia/Vietnam relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2017. There have been many high-level government visits, including between our Prime Ministers.

In Victoria, we have also hosted similar visits. We share a strong trade and investment relationship. And Victoria and Vietnam are parties to a Memorandum of Understanding – signed last year – to foster further exchanges between us.

Let me set the scene with just a little information about the State of Victoria, located in the south east of Australia.

Victoria's population is growing fast: faster than elsewhere in Australia so that, soon, our capital city Melbourne will be the nation's biggest city. The rate of employment, and our economy, are also growing faster than in other parts of the country.

You may be aware that Melbourne has consistently been named in the top 3 of the world's most liveable cities, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. Its perfect scores in infrastructure, healthcare and education are significant factors.

I am proud that many other features also contribute to that liveability. Great urban design, a vast calendar of major sports and arts events, an emphasis on the environment and renewable energies and our exciting innovation ecosystem are amongst them.

I said that we had much in common. Nowhere is that more apparent than when it comes to our shared emphasis on innovation and technology.

Indeed, when our Prime Ministers met here in August this year, they emphasised their commitment to collaboration in knowledge and innovation.

Vietnam is one of the most dynamic tech locations in Southeast Asia.

A culture of innovation is deeply embedded within the fabric of Vietnam – from traditional woven fish traps to unicorn companies and the Vietnam Innovative Startup Accelerator program (of which FPT is an investor).

Your Government's ambition to cement Vietnam as an advanced ICT country is proceeding successfully.

With 70 per cent of your population under the age of 35, your young and vibrant workforce is a significant driving force behind the entrepreneurial spirit.

You have a growing mass of technology users. And a growing network of businesses spanning hardware, software and digital content, as well as many global technology companies choosing Vietnam as a regional manufacturing and engineering hub.

Hanoi is at the heart of this dynamic growth in technology.

For our part in Victoria, as a State without the vast mineral resources that some other parts of the country have enjoyed, we have always had to rely on knowledge and innovation.

And as we have moved from traditional to advanced manufacturing, that has been especially the case.

Melbourne has become Australia's leading tech city with a vibrant startup ecosystem. It is underpinned by our education system that produces more ICT graduates than any other State, and strong government support.

Such support has driven the ecosystem's rapid growth of some 23 per cent per annum, so that Melbourne has recently been recognised as one of the world's five fastest growing innovation ecosystems.

Around half of our several thousand startups are in the tech sector. They are in a diverse range of industries, with strong clusters in medtech, agriculture, sports and major event management, games, cybertech, financial services and cloud technology.

We are home to a number of unicorns including [seek.com](https://www.seek.com.au), [realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au) and [carsales.com](https://www.carsales.com.au).

Interestingly, research shows us that diversity is also a major contributor to our success as a centre of innovation.

We are a particularly diverse community, made up of people from some 200 different backgrounds. One third of Victorian startup founders were born overseas.

Only about one in four Victorian founders, however, are female. And that is not enough!

Mind you, some of our most exciting startups and innovations are led by creative, intelligent, savvy women.

Airwallex, for example, a foreign exchange market and cross border payment company focused on Asia Pacific markets, was co-founded by Victorian university graduate Ms Lucy Liu in 2015, and already has eight international offices, over 260 global employees and more than 130 payable countries.

We are conscious though, that the full potential of women in tech – as in many other areas – has not yet been fully realised.

Although we are making progress in Victoria, we know that there is still much work to be done to ensure that generations of inequity are eroded, so that our girls as well as our boys (and then our women as well as our men) are presented with equal opportunities, and participate equally in our productivity and wealth creation.

To achieve that, Victoria has put in place a specific Strategy with a focus on leadership, empowerment and cultural change, safety and freedom from violence, economic security and health and wellbeing.

It is interesting. Australia is ranked equal first in the world for girls' education in the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap Index, but we know we need to do more when it comes to STEMM, so that girls acquire skills integral to the jobs of the future.

Some things are definitely improving.

In Victoria, we now have women in 50% of the Ministerial roles in our Government, and after a concerted effort, as of 2018, 53 per cent of paid public board positions are held by women.

Both Vietnam and Australia rank well for the overall Index for women in entrepreneurship (Vietnam 18th and Australia 7th). How promising these figures are!

We know though that we need to encourage girls in STEMM Studies. To that end, we are building skills in teachers, supporting women in small business, investing in women's entrepreneurship, and establishing an Equal Workplaces Advisory Council.

From my perspective as Governor, I see great things in this space. Victoria has been chosen as one of a handful of centres in the world to host a Science Gallery, encouraging 15-25 year olds in STEAM.

I see clever scholarships that, for example, enable early or mid career female scientists to employ a researcher to cover for them for 12 months while they stay at home with a baby. And shortly, I am hosting a weekend Hackathon for girls: a first at our 140 year old Government House.

And so, I stand in a room like this with great enthusiasm and optimism.

I know we share a mindset and a range of talents and skills when it comes to innovation.

I know we experience common obstacles for women in tech, and an equally common commitment to removing those obstacles.

I have no doubt that our shared commitment can lead to great results for both Vietnam and Victoria. Collaboration is key to ensuring that our respective strengths become our even greater combined strengths.

I now look forward to hearing from your expert panel. And hopefully to chatting to as many of you as possible a little later.