



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

BROADSIDE FESTIVAL OPENING

Saturday 9th November 2019

Susan Oliver, Chair, Wheeler Centre

Michael Williams, Director, Wheeler Centre

Tamara Zimet, Festival Director, Broadside Festival

International and local guests

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 with us this morning, and I thank Aunty Janet Galpin for her generous Welcome to Country.

I am delighted to be here to open this Broadside Festival.

I am disappointed that I am not able to stay. Still, I was keen to join you, to make a few brief observations.

I emphasise 'brief', because I do not want to stand in the way of the stimulating conversations that you have come to hear.

So, first up, let me say how pleased I am that you have gathered for just that reason. For conversations. How dearly do we need them? Not tweets. Not just slogans, labels or catch-cry.

Barak Obama's words, just last week, were pertinent. That simply tweeting or hash-tagging a judgment about someone else is not activism. It is not the way to effect change.

I am convinced, however, that good, vibrant public discourse, with a variety of views, CAN stir new thoughts and lead to changes that benefit us all.

And so I am particularly pleased that we have speakers and participants from Melbourne, from further afield in Australia and from overseas. As globalised as we have become, the ferment that occurs when we gather from different countries and cultures will always enrich our discussions and expand our ideas.

I note too the mixed ages of those involved: as organisers, speakers and participants.

I admit to a particular enthusiasm when I see that Tam Zimet is the Festival Director.

On a personal level, I am delighted because I have known her since she was a young girl, and have always thought that she was 'one to watch'. On a broader level, she is representative of the new generation of smart and capable women who, thankfully, are stepping into, and leading these important conversations.

It is wonderful to see so many of them here.

That said, how lucky are we that some have never tired in their commitment to thought leadership.

I feel that I have 'grown up', as it were, alongside Helen Garner. I feel that I have been a part of her literary journey across the decades. More aptly put, she has been, through her – at times provocative – writing, a significant part of mine.

A great joy for me was teaching alongside Helen for a number of years. Teaching writing. To judges. Helping to hone their skills in judgment writing. How lucky they were to hear her perspectives. How lucky was I to be with her – and to listen.

Can I say that I am also delighted that the 'F word' has been included in your Festival title. Feminism. The concept has not disappeared, but the word has been less often heard. Well, welcome back! And welcome back in the form of a celebration of different voices, diverse experiences and a variety of perspectives on what it means.

Finally, I am proud that this Festival is being held here in Australia's cultural capital.

You are in an UNESCO City of Literature. A city whose art gallery, (the National Gallery of Victoria), ranks 16th in the world for crowds. A city whose library, (the State Library of Victoria), attracts the 4th highest number of visitors in the world. A city with the country's first symphony orchestra, (the MSO), and the oldest and largest theatre company, (the MTC).

In Victoria, we host more than 400 festivals each year, including one of the world's oldest international film festivals, (MIFF), the largest and oldest Queer Film Festival in Australia and a comedy festival that is ranked alongside Montreal and Edinburgh. I mention our emphasis on the creative industries because it demonstrates the cultural context in which this Festival sits. And in which the Wheeler Centre sits. And is loved. How lucky are we to have people of vision, such as Tony and Maureen Wheeler, the Founders and Patrons of this home for smart, passionate and entertaining public talks on every topic.

We are all enriched by it, as we will be by this Festival spawned from it.

Thank you to the Wheeler Centre, the organisers, the speakers, those who are attending, Creative Victoria, the donors and the partners who have all contributed to bring to life this Festival.

Thank you for the combined vision and generosity that saw yesterday at the Wheeler Centre devoted free of charge to girls and non-binary young people from Melbourne Schools to participate in talks and workshops to spark their interest in these important topics.

I wish you all a stimulating two days, and I am pleased to declare the inaugural Broadside Festival officially open.