



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

WORLD KINDNESS DAY RECEPTION

Wednesday 13th November 2019

Professor Dr Catherine Crock AM, Founder and Chair, the Hush Foundation

Board members

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

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 with us this morning.

Tony and I are delighted that you could join us here at Government House today, to celebrate World Kindness Day and, in particular, the impact of kindness on health and wellbeing.

I must say that the four years or so that we have been in this role has made me think about kindness more than ever before.

That is for several reasons.

First, we spent our career as lawyers.

I do not for one moment mean that the law is a profession devoid of kindness. To the contrary. I loved the 'helping' aspect of the law: promoting rights, facilitating compensation and protecting the vulnerable. And we should never overlook the enormous amount of pro bono work undertaken by the legal profession. Such generosity is clearly an act of kindness.

But in the adversarial setting of a courtroom – often the best and fairest way to determine legal argument – kindness, as such, was not always to the fore.

The second reason I have thought more about kindness in these last few years is that Professor Dr Catherine Crock AM and the Hush Foundation has put it front of mind for me – and for many others.

For almost 20 years, the Hush Foundation has strived to reduce the pain, stress and anxiety experienced by patients undergoing medical procedures at the Royal Children’s Hospital.

What started as the introduction of music for the children and their families, has since embraced literature and theatre and, importantly, expanded to transform the culture of healthcare into a more compassionate model.

You have undertaken inspiring work to draw the direct connection between staff behaviour, staff wellbeing and patient safety.

And within the last few years, you have championed the Gathering of Kindness, a concept not just to promote the concept of kindness, but to find practical ways to embed it into hospital and broader settings.

I am pleased for the opportunity to thank you today. To thank Cath for her vision and her focus across these two decades. It is, of course, in addition to the enormous skill, time and responsibility that her professional work demands of her.

I am pleased for the opportunity to thank the board members, staff, sponsors, donors, volunteers, and artists such as Ms Claire Patti, who is here today. And, I congratulate you for expanding your work on kindness beyond healthcare, via your new partnership with Rotary – of which I am the proud Patron.

But a particular joy for us in welcoming you here on World Kindness Day is that the role of Governor enables us to see up close, and repeatedly, the extraordinary acts of kindness performed by Victorians every day and in every corner of our State.

I welcome World Kindness Day as a day for the community to take stock and acknowledge them. Sometimes, the diet of news we hear, see and read emphasises other aspects of community life – to the detriment of the positivity that abounds.

We see that positivity amongst the Critical Emergency Response teams – volunteers who, in remote parts of our State, drop everything to help as first responders in emergencies, until professional help arrives.

We see it in the groups who make 1000 sandwiches at a sitting, to ensure that children in disadvantaged schools can eat a substantial breakfast to ready them for learning.

We see it in the gentleman in his late 80s who, with his Men's Shed, makes free furniture to assist the families of children with cerebral palsy.

Or in the two primary school children who have started a charity, delivering food and supplies to the homeless.

We see kindness on a big scale, with corporates and philanthropists donating large sums of money, supporting young people in scholarship programs, or with a building to be used rent free for a social enterprise to get on its feet.

And we see kindness on a small scale: a neighbour who cooks for the boys next door who have lost their mum, a community member who starts a local 'lunch club' for isolated locals to come together for a free lunch and some company.

Above all, we see it amongst people simply being good to each other.

And so, on World Kindness Day, we are reminded of the power of kindness.

It makes us all stronger. And it certainly promotes – in the words of Victoria’s State motto, our ‘Peace and Prosperity’

Thank you to all of you for your various contributions to that.