



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

WINNERS OF THE VICTORIAN PROTECTING CHILDREN AWARDS AFTERNOON TEA

Wednesday 29th January 2020

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

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 here with us this afternoon.

Welcome to Government House. It is a pleasure for me to host you here, particularly as I was unable to attend the Awards Ceremony last year.

I was nevertheless keen to meet and congratulate the Award winners.

I well understand the significance of these awards. And I am pleased for:

- the opportunity to congratulate Department child protection staff who have demonstrated best practice,
- to celebrate those who have made outstanding contributions to the youth and family services sector,
- and to thank all those responsible for arranging these important awards.

My interest is for obvious reasons.

Naturally, like anyone in our community, I know that we must look after our most vulnerable and that, sadly, vulnerability often starts at home, and often for those least able to defend themselves from risk – the children.

But I have every reason to want to thank you directly.

Of course, I worked in law across 40 years. During that time, I spent 28 years in the judiciary. If I tell you that I sat in the Children's Court, Magistrates' Court and the Family Court of Australia, you will readily understand my enduring interest in families and child protection.

A few words about child protection. I am in awe of all those who work in this enormously challenging field. I know that it is gratifying work, but I know too that it is hard work. Sometimes sad work. It can be stressful, and in extreme circumstances, it can be traumatic. Especially for those on the front line.

Thank goodness for all of you with the vocation and the commitment to stay the course. To protect those who cannot protect themselves. To advocate for them. To work on policies. To galvanise others. To develop ideas, organisations, strategies and training for better services.

I see that two of these awards are named for someone who certainly stayed the course. Robin Clark was a respected and inspirational leader in the field.

So are those of you in this room. Our community can be grateful to you, for the skills and resilience that you have demonstrated in your work.

I look forward to chatting to you, and then I hope that you will stay to enjoy a tour of the State Apartments.