



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**UIA CENTENARY EVENT WITH H.E. REUVEN RIVLIN PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF
ISRAEL**

Monday 24th February 2020

Margaret Court Arena

Your Excellency President Rivlin

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors Mark Sofer and Chris Cannan

UIA Leaders, in particular our host, Victorian President, Ms Hayley Southwick

And all Distinguished 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 any Elders here with us this evening.

Your Excellency, what a pleasure it is to welcome you to the State of Victoria.

Welcome to the fastest growing State in Australia, and to the city that will shortly be the largest in Australia. Welcome to our exciting State, with more than a quarter of a century of year on year growth, and to Melbourne, renowned as one of the world's most liveable cities.

Perhaps I sound like the predictably proud Governor of the State. And I am.

But my greatest pride is reserved for the fact that Victoria is home to a diverse community, and one in which we place paramount importance on respect, harmony and inclusion.

Nearly half of us were born overseas or have one parent born overseas. I am one of them and I have no doubt that in this arena, many more than half of us would be amongst that group.

Victoria has the largest Israeli community and the largest Jewish community in Australia. They are great contributors to all aspects of life here: in business, the professions, academia, the arts and philanthropy, amongst them.

Your Excellency, it is a great testament to you that this Stadium has gathered so many people this evening.

It shows the appreciation of your important role and the way in which you fulfil it, and it shows great affection for and commitment to the State of Israel.

We are mindful of the challenges faced by Israel, but mindful too of its bounty of achievements.

Those achievements were more than evident when my husband and I were fortunate enough to visit in an official capacity in late 2018. We were able to observe Israel's enormous successes in innovation, in so many sectors and fields of endeavour.

It was our privilege to have been warmly welcomed by you then, and to discuss the many shared interests between Israel and Victoria in security, business, education, culture and social programs.

This gathering this evening enables us to reflect upon those shared interests, and to bring the community together to celebrate the centenary of the UIA.

Although, personally speaking, 100 years does not sound quite as long as it used to, any organisation that achieves such longevity certainly deserves the heartiest congratulations!

UIA has worked consistently across the century since its founding in London, and here in Victoria since 1956, to strengthen Jewish identity in the Diaspora and to fortify the fabric of

Israeli society, with a special emphasis on advancing disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

It is a particular pleasure to see the inter-generational commitment to this cause. To see that many of the leaders of the UIA in Victoria today are the third generation of their families to be involved.

These are good and caring people: contributors across the board. Not only Israel, but our broader local community as well, is the richer for their altruism and activism. And Your Excellency, this celebration is the richer for your presence.

I know that much more will be said about your visit and the UIA's centenary, so let me simply conclude by saying that we wish you, Your Excellency, and the people of the State of Israel, in the words of our State motto, *'Peace and Prosperity'*.