



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**INAUGURATION OF THE HONOURABLE LINDA DESSAU AM
AS THE 29th GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA**

Wednesday 1st July, 2015

The Honourable Daniel Andrews, Premier of Victoria, and Mrs Catherine Andrews

The Honourable Chief Justice Marilyn Warren, Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, and Mr Mick Heeley

Former Governor-General of Australia

Former Governors of Victoria

Former Premiers

Other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

May I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering. I pay my respects to their elders past and present, and thank the Aunties for their warm Welcome to Country.

I can hazard a guess that when you see me standing here this morning, it is apparent to you that I am different from the 28 Governors who have gone before me. It's obvious enough, and it has been widely noted. I am of course the first woman to hold this office.

That is unquestionably an honour. And, as I have observed elsewhere, one that I hope will be less and less a matter for comment as more and more women inevitably step into more and more roles in this State.

However, the issue of "difference" does prompt me towards a reflection – a reflection to which I expect I shall return many times during my years in this role. It is quite simply that, despite how obvious our differences may seem to be, there is generally much more that unites than divides us.

My gender may be different from the 28 Governors who have preceded me, my religious background as well. I suspect too that I am even noticeably smaller than many!

These differences could set me apart. But the differences are in fact insignificant when compared to that which history tells me we all have in common.

I doubt that any incoming Governor has differed from me in the sense of humility he has felt at his appointment, the sense of commitment he has felt to Victoria and all Victorians, and the ambition he has held to contribute in any way possible to a stable, democratic and prosperous State, and a united, peaceful, respectful and caring community.

I have certainly seen those ideals played out by the Governors in the course of my life, most recently by my immediate predecessor, the Honourable Alex Chernov and indeed Mrs Chernov as well.

When my appointment was announced, I spoke of wanting to be a Governor of our times.

I said that, conscious that times do change, and that if we are to remain relevant and useful to the people we serve, then we must change too.

The times have certainly changed in the 160 years since Victoria's first Governor took up the role.

They have changed in significant ways. The commencement of Federation in 1901, and the passing of the Australia Acts in 1986 are just two examples.

They have changed in other ways too.

Lavish balls for 2000 people, with ladies sporting gold dust in intricate hair-dos, (as reported in *The Argus* in 1868), are not events of our times. Nor is the practice, from around that same time, of the Governor's spouse and his children performing musical interludes for their guests after dinner. Luckily for our future guests, I might add!

But there are some things that do not and should not just move with the times.

Guarding the Victorian Constitution, and protecting our system of representative democracy are not, and never should be merely a matter of fashion, nor subject to the whims of a

particular era. It is the same when it comes to pursuing cohesion and mutual respect amongst us all.

These are the principles that traverse the ages. They are the cornerstones of what we hold dear. They, and the traditions that support them, underpin what we are and what we must continue to be.

I don't want to sit down today without taking the opportunity to thank all of you for honouring me with your presence this morning, and to thank the Wesley College Big band, the children from The Song Room, and Shauntai Batzke for their exquisite performances for us.

I wish to acknowledge the distinguished service of the Chief Justice as Lieutenant Governor, and to thank her in prospect in that continuing role.

I want to take the opportunity too to thank Charles Curwen, the Private or Official Secretary to....as of now.... ten Victorian Governors, for the benefit (already) of his help and experience, and to thank the myriad of people in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and in Government House who have so seamlessly brought together this special occasion today.

Of course, the greatest thanks is reserved for my family.

I was blessed with wonderful parents - and for that matter parents in law - all of whom I hope are looking upon us today with the pride and happiness that they deserve.

I am grateful to my parents for so very much: a loving home, a great education, my father's work ethic, my mother's warmth and humour, and their joint emphasis on family, fairness and social justice.

I am truly blessed too with loving siblings and extended family who are a wonderful support to me.

But above all, I am fortunate indeed to have by my side His Honour Judge Howard (Tony) who will thankfully be my partner in this new and exciting role, as he has been in all that we have done in the last 35 years, as we have supported each-other and each-other's careers, and our two gorgeous sons whom we love very much and who, quite simply, give us unequivocal joy.

Finally, if I look for guidance for my next 5 years in this office, I don't need to look very far. There are clear signposts to be found close at hand.

Towards the end of our Australian Anthem we sing these words: "With courage let us all combine". And our Victorian State motto commands two things: "Peace and Prosperity". They are all words and sentiments that resonate with me.

I look forward to celebrating and facilitating, in any way that I can, all the individuals, organisations, businesses and communities that do show courage by combining in the quest for unity and togetherness, and who work tirelessly for peace and prosperity in this, our wonderful State of Victoria.