



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

ARARAT CIVIC RECEPTION

Wednesday, 21 February 2018

Mayor and Councillors, Ararat Rural City

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.

I am absolutely delighted to be here in Ararat.

Although our state's beautiful Government House sits in the heart of the city of Melbourne, the Governor is, of course, the Governor for the whole of Victoria.

I therefore, relish the chance to visit each corner of our state, and everywhere in between.

I love seeing first hand all the great similarities that connect our diverse Victorian communities, and the unique things that set each local area apart.

Of course, each part of Victoria has its own natural beauty and each regional city and town has its own history and highlights.

But, although the particular characteristics and sites vary according to where we find ourselves, what does not vary is the people.

First, we all wish the same: for a calm, safe, healthy and prosperous life for ourselves and our families.

Secondly, there are some common challenges and concerns in regional Victoria. There is the tyranny of distance. The need to ensure a promising future for our children, to give them a reason to stay in – or return to – the local area.

And then there is the roll of the dice with fire, flood and frost, for example, amongst all the factors that determine whether this is a good season or a difficult year to bear.

But the people I have spoken to in the past two days have told me about the unique opportunities and assets they have in this community. And I have seen them too.

Yesterday I visited the Ararat Town Centre, where I admired your magnificent buildings. The foundations of the city are made of pure gold and it's beautiful to see the well preserved legacy of the Victorian gold rush.

Your city – and this region – like everywhere in Victoria, was adversely impacted by war. You lost so many of your young men: barely a family left untouched in one way or another.

I was honoured to lay a wreath at the Ararat War Memorial, and I was very pleased to meet with local RSL members, who have given so much to their community and nation.

Our visit to the Ararat West Primary School was bittersweet.

I saw the devastation felt by teachers and students in the loss of classrooms to fire, but I was heartened by the strength of community spirit and the resilience evidenced by new plans to rebuild facilities that will be better than ever.

One of the highlights of this visit has been hearing from local farmers at the Agricultural Round Table. It has helped me to understand some of the challenges and opportunities here- and to

appreciate anew some of the brilliant farming innovations that make Victoria such a celebrated producer of food and fibre.

Today, I visited the beautiful Royal Mail kitchen garden in Dunkeld, of particular interest because we have a kitchen garden in Government House, in which we are running a range of community programs.

I visited Willaura and its charming refurbished railway station and community space.

It was great to join Ararat Active and Park Run for a well-paced walk around the Alexandra Gardens. The energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers running this initiative was impressive!

I have just come from AME Systems where I have toured their impressive factory and then the well appointed Legacy House, so generously donated.

In fact, generosity is very much a hallmark of the communities in this region.

Thank you to all those taking the time and trouble to meet with us.

Thank you to all those who make this community: to the Mayor, Councillors and CEO, and all the wonderful people who work and volunteer to keep this region so strong.

We hope that you enjoy our hospitality. A special thank you to the wonderful Ararat CWA, (of whom I am the proud Patron), for providing such a spread this afternoon and to the students and staff from Ararat College and Central Grampians LLEN who, I am sure, are providing such friendly service.

We look forward to meeting as many of you as we can this afternoon.