



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

VIGIL FOR CHRISTCHURCH AND THE VICTORIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Monday 18th March, 2019

I join Dr Mohamed Mohideen OAM, the President of the Islamic Council of Victoria, in acknowledging the distinguished guests, Victorians, those from further afield and, of course, our friends from New Zealand.

I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their elders past and present and to elders here with us this evening.

How reassuring it is to see the large crowd gathered here.

And, how very much I wish that we weren't here at all. Not in these circumstances. Circumstances of such sadness.

Like all of us, I simply wish that the unspeakable atrocity in Christchurch last Friday had not occurred.

I wish that 50 families had not lost their precious and innocent loved ones.

I wish that those suffering injuries were not enduring such pain and trauma.

That families were not overwhelmed by grief, or holding bedside vigils in hospital.

That the Muslim and the wider community was not turned upside down with fear and disbelief.

That the confidence of a beautiful and peaceful country had not been shaken.

And I wish that the first responders, and all those tasked with caring for the victims or investigating these deaths did not have to be burdened by the shock and trauma of their work.

But here we are.

And, as we have done before, we take comfort from gathering with each other at a time of such senseless and horrific violence.

We take comfort from being together.

It helps us to remember

That people are essentially kind and good

That our community is a loving one, in which we care for each other

That our differences make us richer

And, that together we are stronger

What else can we remember at such a time of sadness?

We can remember that

The more we learn about each other

The more we embrace each other – our differences as well as our similarities

The more we agree that there is no place in our homes or hearts for ignorance, suspicion or hate, then the more we can be optimistic that goodness will prevail.

These are not the lessons for just some people or just some politicians or just some groups.

We cannot just point the finger at someone else, to complain where they are wrong.

As we gather together to grieve for the men, women and children lost at prayer, and to support their loved ones, the injured and our friends in New Zealand, we share their pain.

But we also share a commitment. The commitment to each take responsibility. To model true support for one another. To understand each other's ways. To recognise and call out hate, anger and ignorance however it might be presented or however it might be disguised.

Only in that way can something good and strong and promising and pure come from something so evil.

This atrocity against Muslims at prayer is an atrocity against us all. On behalf of all Victorians, our deepest sympathy and love is with all those affected.

Thank you to all of you who have come to demonstrate that love with your heartfelt support, as we stand shoulder to shoulder here this evening.