



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

BELERREN OPENING AND FOUNDER'S DAY ASSEMBLY

Friday 26 July 2024

Acknowledgments

Professor Richard Page, Chair of the Council
Dr Peter Miller, Principal, The Geelong College
Foundation Board Members
Members of the Council
Teachers, parents and students.

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this building stands – the Wadawurrung People – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to join you today for two important milestones.

We are here to officially open the new Belerren Sports and Wellbeing Centre while simultaneously celebrating 50 years of coeducation at The Geelong College.

Both achievements have a place in the history of this school and its community.

Spanning more than 160 years, The Geelong College has had a significant impact on Victoria through the students it has taught.

And looking at all of you today, I'm sure that this cohort will be no exception.

You will take your place in the story of the College.

While the College has been established for a relatively long time – particularly among other schools in this State.

This is a short time compared to the land on which we meet today.

Long before European colonisation, this place was the epicentre of Wadawurrung daily life.

Its natural resources sustained the community, providing them with trading materials, as well as meeting places for ceremony and gatherings.

Caring for the land and assuring its longevity is at the heart of Wadawurrung culture, acting as stewards of country and its resources.

The name of the new Sports and Wellbeing Centre, Belerren, means shine in the Wadawurrung language.

Its name honours the Indigenous history of this place and references a hope that students will use these new facilities to reach their full potential.

The history of The Geelong College is one in which each of you have a role to play.

This challenge was taken up by the first girls enrolled at Campbell house in 1974.

I can imagine that being the first female students at an historically single sex school was daunting.

When they first joined the prep class, they were fewer than 10 joining a cohort of more than 300 boys.

They weren't the only ones who were nervous about this significant change.

Staff and administrators watched nervously, hoping the adjustment to coeducation would be a success.

Fortunately, for all of you, it was.

Girls were able to enrol for all year levels in 1975 and since then, the number of young women attending The Geelong College has steadily grown.

That first step in 1974 has made the College what it is today.

On that first day, those girls joined the boys, working with the significant change to make the school better for those coming after them.

Fifty successful years of coeducation has not only been beneficial to the girls and young women that attend the College but to all who attend.

Learning together fosters a culture of collaboration, respect and understanding for all students where boys and girls work together on educational projects, the creative arts, and sports.

Through these channels, each of you has an opportunity to ensure coeducation continues to be a success at The Geelong College.

The Austin Gray Centre for Design and Creative Arts allows students to develop their skills in a wide variety of artistic mediums including print making, painting, photography, woodwork and more.

Similarly, students are able to explore their passion for performance at the Keith Humble Centre for Music and the Performing Arts.

Access to editing booths, drama and dance studios, and large-scale performance spaces is a key benefit of your school - I encourage each of you to take full advantage of it.

Academic education is also supported through state of the art classrooms, an accessible library and knowledgeable teachers able to support you both inside and outside the classroom.

The Belerren Sports and Wellbeing Centre is another way students are given further opportunities to develop as well-rounded individuals.

Education is a great gift, not only for you but also through you to the communities you join.

As each of you take your place in the story of The Geelong College, may I encourage you to consider your community in helping you achieve your best.

Teachers, family, and school staff are a vital part of this, and I thank each of them for their role.

Congratulations on achieving two important milestones.

And thank you to The College Foundation, as well as the many private donors, who've made Belerren possible.

Thank you all.