



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

MELBOURNE CUP EVE RECEPTION 2024

Monday 4 November 2024

Acknowledgments

The Honourable Anthony Carbines MP, Minister for Racing, *representing the Premier* and **Anita Brown**

Professor James Angus AO, Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria and **Helen Angus**

The Honourable Ben Carroll MP, Deputy Premier and **Fiona Rothville**

The Honourable Steve Dimopoulos MP, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and **John Cardona**

The Honourable Danny Pearson MP, Assistant Treasurer

The Honourable Ted Ballieu AO, former Premier of Victoria

His Excellency Andrew Needs, High Commissioner for New Zealand

The Honourable Tim Bull MP, *representing the Leader of the Opposition* and **Kim Bull**

Members of the Judiciary

Members of the Victorian Parliament

Chris Barrett, Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance and **Angela Buckingham**

Victorian Senior Officers and members of the Australian Defence Force

Members of the Consular Corps

Neil Wilson, Chairman, Victoria Racing Club and **Stephanie Wilson**

Kylie Rogers, CEO, Victoria Racing Club

Members of the Racing Community from Australia and overseas

Distinguished Guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

The Melbourne Cup, run under the banner of the Victorian Turf Club, originated from Victoria's favourite pastime: its rivalry with New South Wales.

In 1857, Andrew Chirnside, a wealthy local racehorse owner challenged New South Wales to a 'Championship of the Colonial Turf', boasting that no-one could beat his horse, *Alice Hawthorn*.

The horse *Veno*, and its New South Welsh trainers and owners took up the challenge.

Melbourne buzzed with excitement, with 20,000 people packing into Flemington Racecourse to witness the Victorian horse, *Alice Hawthorn*, lose by two lengths.

The *Melbourne Herald*, could barely contain its frustration, stating:

"Of course, as Victorians, we have very little to say about the race – except to complain that, when this part of Australia was colonised, and since then, our neighbours – who were the original breeders and vendors of our stock – have not supplied us with better horses.

It is their fault, in great measure, if we have nothing better than Alice Hawthorn..."

While it's hard to know if that was a true statement, I believe we can all recognise the interstate rivalry in the statement.

Four years later, on November 7, 1861, around 4,000 people gathered at Flemington Racecourse for a day of horse racing.

They didn't know that they were witnessing the birth of one of the world's most prestigious races.

But what they did know was disappointment!

Melburnian's spirits were already low by the recent news that Burke and Wills had perished on their expedition.

And to further dampen spirits, the trainer of *Veno*, a name that sent shivers down the spines of Victorians, had entered three horses into the race.

To allay Victorian fears, faith was put squarely in local racehorse, *Mormon*. The crowd surged as the horses made the home turn with *Mormon* rushing for glory.

However, *Archer*, one of the horses entered by the trainers of *Veno*, dashed all hopes, maintaining the lead and taking the win.

While Victorians had yet again lost the race, they'd gained something much better – a truly showstopping event.

In a case of “not seeing the forest for the trees”, the importance of the Melbourne Cup wasn't which horse or whose horse won the race – it was the race itself.

Cutting across social strata and uniting crowds '*the race that stops the nation*' is an annual cultural marker of Melbourne, Victoria and Australia – brimming with parties, fashion and picnics.

While the quality of the horses, riders and trainers are very important, the event itself transcends the sport – attracting visitors from every corner of the globe.

Whether you're at the race or not, the buzz of Spring racing can be felt throughout Victoria.

And even those who aren't racing enthusiasts can appreciate the Melbourne Cup as a perfect excuse for a family barbecue – and a few wines.

I understand that, at this event, it is tradition for the Governor to put in their tip for the race.

This year, I'm putting my faith into Zardozi, a four-year-old Australian mare, trained at Flemington.

But no matter who passes the line first – Victoria is still the winner.

I now invite Minister Carbines to address us.