



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **ROSSBOURNE SCHOOL 'THE COOK CENTRE FOR PERFORMING ARTS' BUILDING OPENING**

**Wednesday 27 November 2024**

### **Acknowledgments**

**Rowena Stocks, Chair and Members of the Rossbourne School Board**

**Shane Kamsner, Principal**

**Staff, students and members of the Rossbourne community**

**Distinguished guests**

Let me begin by acknowledging that we meet on the lands of the Wurundjeri People of the Eastern Kulin nations and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and acknowledge any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elders who are with us today.

And can I just begin by particularly mentioning the wonderful Acknowledgement of Country given by the two students at the beginning of this event and that wonderful performance of *Claire de Lune* and the very inspiring photographs of all that happens in this school, and that has happened in this school, across some time.

I'd love to say to Michael Chan that I wish my very rusty piano playing was up to your standard.

Marcel Vermulst had a tough time fitting in as a kid.

He is neurodivergent, and primary school was a difficult and isolating experience for him.

He tried his very best – it was a challenge and a battle.

In primary school, he couldn't ride a bike or kick a ball, and it limited his ability to engage with the other children in his class.

But in 2007, he became a student here at Rossbourne School.

In four years, he went from being unable to play to being chosen to represent the Australian soccer team in the Summer Special Olympics in Greece.

In this environment here, Marcel clearly found the support and encouragement that he needed and deserved.

It's an incredible feat in such a short time for Marcel and for Rossbourne, and it speaks to the special nature of what's provided in this school and the opportunities it gives.

And that is what we're asking for from education.

Because education is the biggest gift that you will give anyone, and providing that opportunity for everyone, recognising that not everyone learns in the same way and in the same environment – that's a very special thing.

The experience for Marcel you would call "life-changing", and you'd have to say, that's what this school provided.

I note that – and it's on the podium there - the maxim of the school is "Thrive on Diversity", and that's demonstrated through Marcel's story.

And it's encouraging to know that it's just one story of many of which this school can be proud.

Maria Montessori, the Italian educator who influenced so much of early education argued for freedom and expression in education and recognising that diversity.

She said of teaching that – and it's actually true:

*"The greatest sign of success for a teacher... is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist.'"*

And as someone, as you've heard, who has spent a life in education – that is what you're looking for – that they have those moments that are all theirs, and that you don't need to exist.

It was just that you were part of providing that opportunity and environment.

I'm sure that for every staff member and teacher here, Maria Montessori's words will resonate.

But to unlock the full potential of a student requires not just the genius of one teacher – though often the genius of one teacher is enough.

To unlock that full potential requires an exploration in a community.

It needs the educator, and educators, and the students themselves to be part of a journey that makes sense and gives opportunity and expression for them.

And that's why it's so wonderful to be here, and I'm so pleased to be here, because Rossbourne School is able to offer a broad range of facilities and resources – this being the newest and clearly the most glorious therefore – to help students to do just that.

To find that space that is all theirs.

This new Cook Centre for Performing Arts is a wonderful commitment and a testament to the vision of all those who have made it happen.

So just as Marcel found his footing on the soccer field – countless students will discover their passions treading these boards, whether, as mentioned by the Chair, behind the scenes or at the front of the stage.

And so, whether it's music, or dance, or drama or other forms of creative expression, the new building is more than just bricks and mortar.

They're that space, where we gain meaning and understanding strongly through the expression of our cultures.

And they come, in very large part through the performing arts.

I know that this space will help many students find their voice – building their confidence, demonstrating their talents.

I want to again extend my thanks to the staff, to the parents, to the volunteers and supporters who've made all this possible.

And to the students of the Rossbourne School – people are always talking about your future, and that's very important, and it's the opportunity that education gives.

Let me say one other thing – the thing that you'll always remember is the joy of *now*.

You will get the best out of it while you're enjoying and exploring *now*.

That's almost the best preparation for your future that you can ever have.

Not so much the looking forward, but taking all the opportunities of the moment.

I hope you have those moments of discovery, that you learn new skills and, in doing so, you are yourselves, as if the teachers don't exist.

So can I say again, thank you to all of you, for the work you do here can never be overstated and it's a great privilege for me to be here and recognise it.

Thank you.