



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

OPENING OF THE LYCEUM CLUB'S NEW FLOOR

Tuesday 10th April, 2018

Ms Helen Moylan, President of the Lyceum Club

Ms Jennifer Milne, Immediate Past-President of the Lyceum Club

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 with us this evening.

Thank you for inviting me here today to open this beautiful addition to your Club.

When the Club's 25 founding women met for the first time, 106 years and 3 weeks ago, there was much about today that they could never have envisioned.

They certainly could not have predicted a Club membership of more than 1,400, these beautiful facilities, the Club's much-loved and valued art collection or the more than 40 flourishing interest 'circles' – including one devoted to technology.

All that said, there is so much that those forward-thinking women could, and did predict – with great accuracy.

They predicted that women would no longer be prepared to accept a passive role in society, as had mostly been the norm until that time.

And their vision, for membership to be based on a woman's achievement – not her social standing or wealth – is one that has certainly stood the test of time as the hallmark of the Lyceum Club.

From the start, this Club focused on providing an environment in which not only could women's achievements be recognised, but their lifelong learning could also be fostered.

These things might not strike us as particularly remarkable today, but more than a century ago, polite society prescribed that those few women who did have the privilege of education were preferably to sit idle on their accomplishments.

I'm reminded of Virginia Woolf's timeless essay, *A Room of One's Own*, where she narrates the damage caused to women, by shutting them out of education and all the other public opportunities open to men.

She wrote that, to counter the way women could be excluded from various professions – in that instance, writing literature:

'a woman must have.... a room of her own....'

At its heart, in 1929, Woolf was recognising the crucial importance of *space* – a room, an office, a building – for women to have the time, the freedom and the opportunity to learn, to be creative and to be productive.

And so, it is in this vein that I note that this Club effectively provides its members with 'a room of their own': a place dedicated to promoting women's intellectual growth and friendship. A space to be together, to enjoy companionship in intellect, and in which to pursue knowledge.

A place in which, on a daily basis, new and old ideas are discussed and considered. Where economics, art and poetry are analysed and dissected. And where new skills are learned and fresh passions sparked.

What an amazing thought, as we stand in these magnificent surroundings today, that for almost 60 years, since May 1959, the Club has been housed here in Ridgway Place, despite some

members back then having expressed quite strong views that it was unfortunately located in this 'sordid little lane', as they put it!

Since then, there have been various iterations.

How gratifying that all the architectural and design work has been undertaken by women, a fact noted favourably in 2000 by the 'National Trust Statement of Significance'.

And so, this latest addition is again the creation of a renowned female architect – Kerstin Thompson – who worked with construction manager, Vanessa Goulding from McCorkell Builders.

It is worth noting that when this building was first constructed in the 1950s, the women in charge at that time had the foresight to ensure that the structure was able to take another floor in the future.

And thanks to the sound financial management of the Club, this ambitious project has been completed without the need to borrow funds.

The result is this large and airy open space. A flexible space that can be separated into smaller spaces via hidden panels: to create a dining area, a reception space, a lounge – essentially anything the Club requires.

It is contemporary, and yet it remains sympathetic to its surroundings, and cleverly takes full advantage of the tree line so generously provided by the Lyceum Club's close neighbour, the Melbourne Club. You can practically touch that famous 150 year old tree!

I understand that your next phase of work, the Level 4 rooftop, is now under construction. What a beautiful use of this site.

May I congratulate all those involved. I acknowledge the particular vision and contribution of President Helen Moylan – one of the key drivers behind this project – and Past-President, Jennifer Milne for her many years of service to this Club.

You must feel great pride today that the Lyceum Club adds another 'room of their own' for future generations of women.

And so, it now gives me great pleasure to cut the ribbon to declare the new floor of the Lyceum Club officially *open*.