



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Tuesday, 19 September 2017

The Honourable Michael Danby MP, Federal Member for Melbourne Ports

Mr Peter van Vliet, Regional Director Victoria and Tasmania, Department of Immigration and Border Protection

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting, and I pay my respects to elders past and present and to any elders with us this morning.

The acknowledgement of those who lived here and cared for this land for more than 50,000 years before white settlers arrived is particularly pertinent today, on an occasion when we gather to welcome those now joining the Australian family.

It is a privilege for me to preside over this citizenship ceremony. It is important to my role, as the Governor of Victoria - and it is dear to me personally, given my own family background.

First, as to the role. The Governor, representing the Queen as the independent Head of State of Victoria, has four main duties.

The first is as the guardian of the Victorian Constitution on behalf of the people of Victoria, making sure that the Victorian Parliament acts within its boundaries and that, for example, there is a smooth transition between governments.

The second is to represent the people of Victoria on important ceremonial occasions, for example on ANZAC Day, when we commemorate those who have fought for our country.

The third part of the role is to participate in and promote international engagement to ensure that Victoria is connected with the rest of the world, to ensure that, in a globalised world, Victoria can flourish commercially, socially and culturally.

And the final part of the role is for the Governor to work right across the State and with all different people and communities to encourage, facilitate and celebrate success in all aspects of the life of this State.

And as a leader with no political association, the Governor acts as a symbol of unity, seeking to represent and encourage the whole Victorian community, advocating and facilitating mutual respect and confidence.

What better way to represent the people of our State than to officiate at a ceremony to welcome you, our newest Australians and Victorians today in this House: a House for all Victorians.

Personally, this Citizenship Ceremony is, as I said, dear to me. Almost half of all Victorians were born overseas, or like me, had one parent born overseas.

Throughout my childhood, I was left in no doubt by my father that we were fortunate to be raised in Victoria. He had come here in difficult circumstances, but loved this country in which he could safely raise and educate his children.

For some of you too, today marks the end of a long and perhaps difficult journey, physically, mentally, or even figuratively.

I am conscious that you arrive here from different backgrounds and life experiences. Some of you have lived here for many years and are already quite well settled. Some of you are more recently arrived and still adapting to a new life in a different and unfamiliar setting.

Against that backdrop, and depending on your language and culture, the settling process may be significantly easier or harder.

But I am sure that what you share in common with each other and indeed with all Australians, or Victorians, is the desire for a safe, good, calm life and the best possible opportunities for yourselves and your children. And a common respect for our stable democracy.

Please know that we welcome you and want you to do well in your new home. Your success is our success.

And let me share two thoughts with you: one from our Australian National Anthem, the other from Victoria's State motto.

The second verse of the Australian Anthem, (from today, your anthem), is the verse less often sung, but it contains these important words:

*For those who've come across the seas,
We've boundless planes to share
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair*

I particularly appreciate that call for us to combine....with courage.

It is a realistic recognition that sometimes it does take courage to put aside or see past difference, to see what unites rather than what divides us, and to combine with each other rather than to retreat with our own.

As to the Victorian State motto, (soon to be your motto), it simply calls for 'Peace and Prosperity'. I see a broad interpretation of that.

'Peace' comes to us, not just because we don't fight with each other, but also when we each have a sense of belonging, of being respected and valued.

And 'prosperity' does not relate just to wealth, but to the opportunity – for ourselves and our families- to 'prosper' by a fair go, whether that is in terms of employment or study, or general well-being.

And so I wish for you, as I do for all Victorians, the courage to combine with your fellow Australian citizens, and I wish you all peace and prosperity.

I congratulate you on becoming Australian citizens. And I hope that you love this country as much as my family does.