



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

IDAHOBIT RECEPTION

Monday 15th May, 2017

The Honourable Martin Foley MP, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Mental Health, Creative Industries and Equality representing the Premier

The Honourable Bruce Atkinson MLC, President of the Legislative Council

The Honourable David Davis MP, representing the Leader of the Opposition and the Shadow Minister for Equality

Ro Allen, Commissioner for Gender and Sexuality

Graham Ashton, Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police

Distinguished guests, one and all

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

Tony and I are truly delighted to welcome you all to Government House to mark Wednesday's International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

We welcome all of you who identify as members of the LGBTI community, and we welcome the families, friends and allies who join you in respect for and support of Victoria's LGBTI Community.

For those of you who are returning to our iconic Government House, we say welcome back. For those of you who are visiting for the first time, we offer an especially warm welcome.

I am certain that, in this House at least, tonight's IDAHOBIT reception is an historic first.

In one sense though, to us, there is nothing especially remarkable about what we are doing here tonight. It certainly ought not be remarkable and, I am sure, like all of you, we look forward to a day when an occasion like this will be rather commonplace – or better still, unnecessary.

I say it is not remarkable what we are doing tonight, because, for me as Governor, this is what the Governorship is here for, and what this House is here for: to recognise, to celebrate and to nurture all Victorians, and to honour those who enrich our community and serve the good of others, particularly those who are vulnerable.

It seems extraordinary that it was only on 17 May 1990, well within the lifetime of so many in this room, that the World Health Organisation removed the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder.

Twenty seven years later, many will lament the slow pace of change since then, but thanks to the courage and efforts of large numbers of you, attitudes are changing and the changes are gathering pace.

May I particularly acknowledge those who work at a grass roots level across Victoria, including in our rural and regional communities, and with our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Never doubt the importance of the work that you do to build understanding, pride, networks and, critically, to improve services and support for the differing experiences, identities and needs across our society.

Many of you gathered here this evening put in untold hours of your own time as volunteers to improve the lives of LGBTI Victorians, from children who are bullied at school to elders in need of dignified aged care.

Gathered together this evening is a diverse and proud community – one which has carried the torch of courage, often at great cost, to combat homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, to speak up for the transgendered and for those who identify as intersex.

This week you and I and Victorians of goodwill the length and breadth of this great State will join with people around the globe to acknowledge and denounce the discrimination and violence that the LGBTI community continues to experience, at home and abroad, and I wish you a strong voice in doing so.

However, IDAHOBIT is not just a protest, a day ‘against’. It is also a day ‘for’: a day for celebration; a celebration of survival, visibility, solidarity and achievement.

Whether a member of the LGBTI community or not, everyone in our State has a stake in your success. I say this because a society in which everyone is safe, where everyone is included and where everyone is productive is something from which all Victorians benefit.

We look forward to chatting with as many of you as we can, shortly, but now it now gives me great pleasure to invite Victoria's first Minister for Equality, the Honourable Martin Foley MP, to address us.