



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**U3A RECEPTION
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE OLDER PERSON**

Thursday 1st October 2020

Mrs Webster and Distinguished guests

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 here with us in this call.

Tony and I welcome everyone to this Virtual Reception – a phrase most of us could not have imagined 6 or so months ago!

I suspect that some of you, like us, are keen to ensure that this COVID-19 global pandemic doesn't permeate every single thing that we say and do. It can be all consuming and we do need some respite.

That said, on this, the UN International Day of Older Persons – a day when we raise issues affecting older persons, as well as appreciating their contributions to society – it is impossible not to reflect just a little on COVID-19's impact on us.

Certainly, this virus has underscored the vulnerability that can visit us as we age. It has also brought into sharp focus the need to ensure safe and dignified care for our ageing population.

At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted a number of things truly worthy of celebration.

The first is just how much we, (it IS 'we'), have not only contributed to our communities, but how much we continue to contribute.

This is not new news to any of you, I know.

In this role, Tony and I have seen it clearly, across a swag of Seniors' Award ceremonies and, more generally, while traversing our State. Our seniors have by no means just 'hung up their boots', or retired from the community. They have contributed their time, skills and wisdom, most particularly in volunteering.

And how much that contribution has been missed while they have been precluded from volunteering. Missed by the organisations and people they help. And missed by the volunteers too.

Many of you here today will know first-hand what I mean.

There is something else to celebrate today. Look at us! A generation that certainly did not grow up with technology. And although many of us still struggle, and most of us still irritate our children with the whole '*Which button? Am I on mute? Can you see me?*' start to our calls, here we all are! Meeting virtually. We have adapted. We have risen to the new normal. We have learnt.

And that brings me so squarely to U3A.

In my first year as Governor, I joined you at your Biennial Conference, which was themed '*Thirty Years and Still Growing*'. I commented on how much I liked that theme, particularly as it relates to continuing learning.

Since then, I have crossed paths many times with U3A. A number of groups have toured at Government House, with a particularly keen and knowledgeable guide: my husband. I know how much he enjoys showing the House and, importantly, talking about the contemporary work that we undertake here.

Recently I met with U3A Wangaratta, and heard then of some of the changes that COVID has necessitated for many of you.

As the proud Patron of U3A, I am so pleased to be learning more from you this morning. And I am pleased for the opportunity to thank you for all for showing that, at whatever our age, we can keep opening our minds to new experiences and new ideas.

Finally, I am sure that we can all agree that as enabling as we find this technology, one thing it can't provide is a nice cup of tea and Government House chicken sandwich or cake! Let's hope that before long, we can again meet in person!