



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

**PATHWAYS TO POLITICS  
RECEPTION  
Wednesday 21 April 2021**

**Ms Carol Schwartz AO**, Chair, Pathways to Politics Program for Women Joint Steering Committee, and Chair, Trawalla Foundation, and **Mr Alan Schwartz AM**  
**Professor John Howe**, Director, Melbourne School of Government  
**Members of Parliament and Local Government**  
**All distinguished guests, including Pathways to Politics Program Alumnae and current graduating participants**

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering, and I pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you all to Government House to celebrate the University of Melbourne *Pathways to Politics Program for Women*.

That said, with this group, I find myself at somewhat of a loss as to what to say.

First, I cannot surprise you with a revelation – as it were – that all is not well for women in so many spheres – including in our parliaments.

Otherwise, I don't need to persuade you as to just how important it is to have women's, and other diverse voices in positions of power. You already know that.

And, certainly, I don't need to inform you of research suggesting that policy-makers are better able to make decisions in line with the preferences of their constituents, if the policy-makers themselves reflect the diversity found within their communities. Nor that organisations – and indeed countries – with a higher degree of gender equality, are generally better managed.

And I don't need to tell you of all the measures on which we are still lagging, whether in parliamentary representation, in the top rungs of business or in pay equity.

I don't need to tell you these things, not only because you already know them, but because you are a group committed to achieving the changes that we need to see.

Congratulations to each one of you for stepping up.

As the achievements of the growing alumnae group will attest, whether or not you go on to run our nation or state – or even whether or not you ultimately run for political office – the course you have undertaken will equip you with better skills and heightened confidence for a wide range of leadership roles.

It is why, in yet again not being able to resist my friend Carol Schwartz AO's request to host this reception, I wanted to ensure that we added some particular value for you.

Don't get me wrong. Facilitating an opportunity for you to relax and socialise with each other, to enjoy interaction with faculty and supporters and to meet with the alumnae ahead of you, is not, from any point of view, time wasted.

But I have the strong view that knowledge is truly power. Within Government House, and within the Office of the Governor, there resides great knowledge to be imparted, not only as to the history of Australia's federation and the role of the states, but also for an understanding of the workings of our democracy and the contemporary role of the Governor.

Such knowledge will strengthen your arm in many settings, obviously within, but not limited to a political pathway.

I am pleased for you that you have had the opportunity to hear from our Official Secretary, Joshua Puls MVO.

Josh has an excellent pedigree: an outstanding knowledge of constitutional law and history, the experience of working with a number of Governors and HRH The Prince of Wales, as well as a slew of executive roles in the VPS.

I am confident that Josh will have emphasised to you that mine is an apolitical role. It is essential to our democratic processes that matters of politics and policy are for elected officials alone. The Governor does not even have the right to vote while in office.

I reiterate that because it explains my enthusiasm for this event. From my perspective, for those of you who will embark upon political life, I have no personal interest as to your political party or your political preferences.

My interest lies exclusively in seeing more of you in our parliaments, councils and in positions of power. My interest lies in public office-holders looking like the communities they represent. My interest lies in little girls (and for that matter, importantly, little boys too) seeing women in every possible role – in seeing only possibilities, not barriers or obstacles, real or imagined.

As we navigate our recovery from the global pandemic and big issues, like climate and a shifting world order, now, more than ever, we need different voices and the best minds finding solutions.

You are amongst those we need. And so, we welcome the opportunity to host you here, to congratulate you on completing the *Pathways to Politics Program* and to encourage you in your future careers.

We also welcome the chance to thank everyone involved in this Program. Thank you to Carol and Alan Schwartz and the Trawalla Foundation, to the Women's Leadership Institute and the University of Melbourne, and everyone who contributes to realise this important Program.

Thank you to the alumnae for taking the plunge!