



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**MEET THE PUPS
GUIDE DOGS VICTORIA
Wednesday 13 October 2021**

Mr Iain Edwards, Chair, Board members, staff
and **supporters of Guide Dogs Victoria**.

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which I am sitting and I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to Elders from other communities who might be amongst us today.

I don't need to labour the point that we do wish we were welcoming you to Government House this morning, as had been the plan. But, as the Patron of Guide Dogs Victoria, I am grateful that, with the usual excellence of this organisation, Karen and her team have ensured that we can still be together.

One upside to this virtual format, I suppose, is that we are not distracted by the adorable puppies who would have been running around our Fountain Court at this moment! (Actually, most of us probably feel that's a downside!)

A **definite** upside, however, is that the group gathered here is not one that needs to be convinced of the magnificent work of GDV, and just how much it – and the community it serves – value the support that is so generously given.

It is of course a feather in GDV's cap that it is continually recognised as one of Australia's Most Trusted Charity brands, but the real feather is quite simply how much it helps to improve the lives of so many thousands of people.

Whether through advocacy, the Guide Dogs' Program, education programs or occupational therapy, GDV ensures that people with low vision or blindness are empowered as active and involved members of the community.

Today, our focus is on the litter of pups you'll shortly meet, and the heartfelt feelings of gratitude to all of you who are supporting them.

I have had the smallest glimpse of how life-changing these little fellows can be, having previously caught up, (virtually, during lockdown), with Melaine Robinson, whom I understand is here today with her beautiful dog, called *Dessau*. Yes, I am biased!

I go back a long way with *Dessau*. It was April 2017, and I can honestly say that I had a warm feeling the first time I met her. More accurately, I had a warm and damp feeling...puppy *Dessau* was apparently somewhat overwhelmed, (if you know what I mean!), when first placed in my arms in the Government House Ballroom.

I note that it is part of this organisation's stated purpose to look for solutions to make a big difference. It succeeds, thanks to everyone's contribution, and today we celebrate these little pups, many of whom will themselves go on to make a very big difference.

I thank your Chair, Iain Edwards, and the Board, the indefatigable Karen Hayes AM and her staff, the huge number of volunteers, every sponsor and donor, including the '*Puppy Pals*', and each formal and informal Ambassador of Guide Dogs Victoria.

Your contributions are always valuable. Never more so than when made in the challenging context of a global pandemic. And when extended to those with low vision or blindness, who have had more to contend with than usual during this community health crisis.

As we look now to better times, I thank everyone connected with Guide Dogs Victoria and wish you all well.