



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

**STATE MEMORIAL FOR THE HON JOHN LANDY AC CVO MBE**  
**Tuesday 20 December 2022**

**Colonel Mark Richards**, representing the Governor-General of Australia  
**Tim Pallas MP**, Treasurer, representing the Premier of Victoria  
**Professor James Angus AO**, Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, and **Lady Southey AC**, former Lieutenant-Governor  
**The Right Reverend the Honourable Dr Peter Hollingworth AC OBE**, former Governor-General of Australia  
**The Hon. Steve Bracks AC, the Hon. John Brumby AO, the Hon. Ted Baillieu AO and the Hon. Denis Napthine AO**, former Premiers of Victoria  
**Cindy McLeish MP**, representing the Leader of the Opposition  
**Former State and Federal Members of Parliament**  
**Distinguished guests**  
**Above all, Lynne, Matt and Alison Landy, and the other members of the Landy family here today**

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are gathering, and I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to Elders of other communities who may be with us.

And I thank Uncle Perry Wandin for his Welcome to Country.

My assigned task is to talk of John Landy the Governor.

In one way that's easy. He was definitively a fine and popular Governor.

On the other hand, it's a challenge. It's hard not to draw outside the lines. The truth is that John Landy the man, John Landy the famous athlete, John Landy the scientist, and John Landy the Governor are one and the same. That was the beauty of him. No artifice.

The same goodness and honest application were the hallmarks of each part of John's life. As Governor, he showed the same care for people and for the natural world as he had done throughout his working life before his appointment. He applied the same diligence and dedication that had underpinned his outstanding results as an athlete. And he showed the humility that was consistent with his previous life.

History tells us that our State Governors have come from different backgrounds. Although joined by a common desire to serve, they have brought different strengths and different interests.

At the time of his appointment, John was still only the 5<sup>th</sup> Governor to have been born in Victoria. He was one of the few who had been a schoolteacher for a part of his career. He was the only Olympic medallist.

And, although there had been those who had dabbled as naturalists – dating back as far as Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe – none had led their careers focused on the natural world and conservation as John Landy had.

And none, while living in our magnificent Government House, had spent most of their rare and precious spare time working assiduously on his 'bugs', including the personal butterfly and moth collections that John generously bestowed on the Australian National Museum in 2018 and the Australian National Insect Collection in 2016, respectively.

Governor Landy's background in agriculture and the natural environment meant that he never overlooked our Victorian regions and the role played by those on the land.

Our former Official Secretary, Joshua Puls MVO, formerly a young Aide to the Landys, tells me that John was never happier than when in the country, where he would readily chat with farmer and shopkeeper alike, showing a welcome empathy for life outside our city centres.

Josh also tells me that on those regional tours, he – Josh – always noticed how ‘*women of a certain age*’, as Josh put it, used to ‘*turn into schoolgirls*’ when that particular Governor visited.

He not only had natural warmth and charm but of course his reputation preceded him. Everyone knew of his brilliant athletic career. And everyone knew the story of Landy and Clarke, immortalised now in bronze at the Olympic Park precinct.

It’s funny but, although the rest of the world instantly recognised the mark of the man who showed such legendary sportsmanship, I’ve heard that John himself thought that all the fuss was a bit overblown.

That was typical of John Landy’s humility.

There are very affectionate Government House memories of that beautiful quality.

There is one story of a big dinner early in his governorship, when the Aide almost had to grab John by his jacket to stop him as he headed towards the door to go into dinner. He had heard the MC asking everyone to move in for the arrival of the official party. It hadn’t occurred to him that everyone was moving inside to get ready for HIM!

A former Aide also tells the story of another dinner where no one would start eating because the Governor had not yet started. The Aide gestured from a neighbouring table for the Governor to start. Later, he told the Aide that he’d found it hard because his mother had always taught him not to start eating before others had started!

Governor Landy’s time in office started on 1 January 2001. It was an auspicious date – the centenary of Federation. Indeed, in his inauguration speech, he referred to the fact that it was then 9.45am, and he was leaving for Sydney with the Premier at 10.30am.

Quite a whirlwind of a start to his new Governorship.

In that same speech, he went on to say that his Lieutenant-Governor, Lady Southey AC, would therefore host the 700 guests assembled that morning. Also quite the start to the partnership they enjoyed across his years in office.

I think a highlight of those years was when John presented the baton to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, completing the Queen's Baton Relay, at the 2006 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony. A much loved moment for all those who watched.

Of course, I want to say something about John's partnership with Lynne. You simply couldn't ask for a better Vice-Regal partnership than John and Lynne Landy. And, in saying that, I know how much such a partnership counts in a demanding role, particularly for private individuals who move into a more public life.

They were quite the double act. I know first-hand how much Lynne contributed across their time in Government House.

I was one of the lucky beneficiaries of her lunches, in which she brought together groups of terrific women, many of whom I would never have come to know as colleagues or friends but for Lynne's introduction.

At this State Memorial today, we remember an upright man. A straight shooter. A man of his word. A man renowned for his integrity. Someone who spoke the truth.

Except, perhaps, in one notable instance.

In his Inauguration Speech upon being sworn as Victoria's 26th Governor, John said:

*'In my youth, I was accustomed to attempting records, but this is far beyond my capability... but I will try!'*

It is true that he tried. But it was not true that it was in any way beyond his considerable and varied capabilities, of which Victorians were for many years and, in many ways, the beneficiaries.

Today is an opportunity to commemorate the Hon John Landy. To thank him for all his contributions. To pass on the condolences of a grateful State to Lynne, to Alison, and to Matt. And to thank them for sharing him with us.