



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

PATHWAYS TO POLITICS PROGRAM FOR WOMEN RECEPTION

Thursday 16 February 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Carol Schwartz AO, Chair of the Trawalla Foundation and Founding Chair of the Women's Leadership Institute Australia and **Alan Schwartz AM**, Founder and the Managing Director of the Trawalla Foundation

Professor Nicola Phillips, Provost of the University of Melbourne

Members of Parliament and Local Government

Pathways to Politics Program Alumnae

Distinguished guests

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to Elders of other communities who may be with us.

I am delighted to welcome you to Government House to celebrate the graduation of the 2022 *Pathways to Politics* cohort.

It has been a pleasure to host this event since my friend, Carol Schwartz AO, first persuaded us to do so, some years back.

The program's ambitions – to improve women's representation in politics – are, not surprisingly, dear to my heart. They are also particularly topical, although not new.

From Federation, women's representation in our parliament got off to an awfully slow start. It was more than three decades before the first woman was elected to Federal Parliament.

You'll forgive me, I hope, for noting that Vida Goldstein, the first woman to **nominate for** Federal Parliament, (in 1903), was in fact from Victoria. Indeed, Victoria's Parliament was ahead of its Federal counterpart with Lady Millie Peacock elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1933, ten years before Enid Lyons became the first woman elected to the House of Representatives.

As you know, parliamentary representation not only got off to a slow start for women, it has been, across many decades, a slow build.

Last year, Australia was about 57th in the international ranking for women in national parliaments.

Despite all this, I remain hopeful.

This Program – and you, the 2022 cohort – contribute to my optimism.

You are now amongst the more than 300 alumnae who have been committed and bold enough to participate in it.

Some have stood for election. Some have been elected. More will be. A special congratulations to recently elected parliamentarians and councillors who are with us this evening.

As we navigate the emerging challenges of climate, economic uncertainty, and a shifting world order, now more than ever, diversity of perspectives is essential.

We know the benefits of any parliament that reflects the community it serves.

I am grateful to my Official Secretary, Jonathan Burke, for discussing the role of the Governor and the Office of the Governor with you a little earlier.

I am certain that he impressed upon you that, as Governor, mine is an apolitical role.

In that politically agnostic capacity, I have a heightened appreciation of the importance of strong and diverse representation in both government and opposition.

I urge you all to use what you've learnt to *challenge the face of politics, whether* at a local, state or federal level.

Thank you to everyone involved in the *Pathways to Politics Program for Women*. Thank you to Carol Schwartz AO, Alan Schwartz AM and the continued generosity of their Trawalla Foundation and Women's Leadership Institute.

Thank you too to Professor Nicola Phillips, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the University of Melbourne, and the Pathways Steering Committee.

Finally, congratulations to all of you graduating tonight. We look forward to what you will achieve, and the example you will set.