



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY LUNCH
Wednesday 8 March 2023

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.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you to Government House for this International Women's Day lunch.

I suspect that, like me, you are called upon to attend and often present at many IWD events, not only on International Women's Day, but across what has become IWD week (at least!). Indeed, there seems to be a growing number of events added to the mix every year.

Across the last 8 years, I have been privileged to host or attend a wide range of them.

They have included addresses to large groups of public servants, health workers, police, sportspeople, women in science, students and some of the heroic women who helped fellow Victorians during the 2019/2020 summer bushfires.

Some in the House. Some in different parts of our city. Some in our regions. Even some in the course of official overseas visits.

In this, my last year as the Governor of Victoria, I wanted to host an IWD lunch here. And I mean, HERE.

At this table. The State dining table. The table that has, across almost a century and a half, hosted Royalty, Heads of State from around the world and our State government and other leaders.

A table that has seen many men. Many men!

During our time here, it has also hosted hundreds of community members at various lunches and dinners. For school captains and for young people of mixed backgrounds for Iftar and Passover dinners. Each year, we have hosted Christmas lunches for the workers and volunteers who would otherwise be working on Christmas Day.

Today, this historic table must be singing with joy as it, in a first, hosts only women. Well, almost only women!

Tony and I are thrilled to be hosting together. And I emphasise that we are equally thrilled.

Tony has always been clear in this role – as well as in our earlier professional and personal lives – that gender equity is an issue that affects us all. It is not just a ‘women’s issue.’ A lack of parity lessens every one of us, regardless of gender.

I know that you need no convincing. You are all leaders in our State.

And if this table held more, we could have filled it countless times over with wonderful Victorian women.

But we have used the limited places to welcome a group from amongst the very many women whose contributions we have admired across our years in this role.

Across my career, on each IWD, I’ve dutifully addressed the relevant theme set for the day.

Although I acknowledge that themes or slogans can move the dial, I’m not sure how far or fast they’ve moved this particular dial.

So, this year, I’ve chosen to eschew the ‘theme,’ in favour of celebrating a group who **HAVE** moved the dial – by excelling at what they do, inspiring and helping other women to do the same and by advocating for parity.

We thank each one of you for the leadership you show in your work, your lives, your sectors and your community. We thank you for joining us and taking time from your busy schedules, and we hope that you enjoy lunch and each other.