



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

MELBOURNE CUP EVE RECEPTION 2023
Monday 6 November 2023

Acknowledgments

The Honourable Ben Carroll MP, Deputy Premier,
representing the Premier and **The Honourable Anthony Carbines MP**, Minister for Racing
Professor James Angus AO, Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria
The Honourable Ted Baillieu AO, former Premier of Victoria
His Excellency Tim Mawe, Ambassador of Ireland and
Members of the Consular Corps
Members of the Judiciary
Commissioners and Secretaries of the Victorian Public Service
Senior Australian Defence Force Officers, Victoria
Neil Wilson, Chairman and **Steve Rosich**, CEO, Victoria Racing Club
Members of the Racing Community from Australia and from around the world
And all our distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to welcome you all to Government House this evening.

2023 marks 162 years of the Melbourne Cup, and of course, much has changed across that time.

When the first race was run in 1861, Victoria was only beginning to find its feet as an independent colony.

Having formally separated from New South Wales in 1851, Victorians were working hard to differentiate themselves from their northern neighbours.

Thanks to the recent Gold Rush, a Melbourne identity, that embraced many cultures, entertainment and the arts, was beginning to emerge.

1861 saw the official opening of what became the National Gallery of Victoria.

It also saw the influx of migrants from around the world, creating demand for major public events and entertainment.

Answering that demand, among others, was the Melbourne Cup.

What began as something more limited than the current spectacular – the first race had roughly 4000 spectators who watched one of the winners receive a gold watch for his efforts – has grown into a major international sporting event.

It's expected that this year's race will attract more than 250,000 people to Flemington and a global audience of 750 million.

Of course, a fascination with the race is nothing new.

When American author, Mark Twain, attended the race in 1895, he remarked, "*Nowhere in the world have I encountered a festival of people that has such a magnificent appeal to the whole nation. The Cup astonishes me.*"

Similarly, after the first Melbourne Cup in 1861, the Riverine Grazier's Melbourne correspondent described "*the excitement consequent on the cup,*" and lamented that its completion meant people were left with only the "*spasmodic efforts... of our members of Parliament*" to entertain them.

For the benefit of Minister Carbines, I'll note that the work of he and his fellow Parliamentarians goes far beyond entertainment!

The history of this important event has always run alongside that of this historic house.

It was Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor, Charles La Trobe that set aside the land for the Flemington Racecourse, home to the Melbourne Cup.

Iterations of this reception have been held at Government House since the early 1880s, with Governors from other States making the long journey to be in attendance.

This Cup always then, has been an important component of Victoria's major events as well as a key component of the State's history.

By bringing together people from around the world in a celebration of endeavour and entertainment, it is reflecting some of the elements of Melbourne and Victoria's successes as a city and State.

I understand that, at this event, it is tradition for the Governor to put in their tip for the race.

[I note that my daughter gave her tip this year to the family as, "*wear sensible shoes and don't drink too much.*" One for the ages].

But to return to tradition, my tip this year is Future History. Not the favourite but a hope for a better result!

I look forward to attending the race tomorrow alongside so many of you.

Congratulations to the Victoria Racing Club board for another exciting Melbourne Cup Carnival.

And a very warm welcome to our international guests. I hope you have the opportunity to explore many other aspects of our wonderful State while you're here.

I now invite Minister Carbines to the lectern.