



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

MELBOURNE HIGH SCHOOL
CENTENARY OF THE TURNING OF THE SOD
Wednesday 18 February 2026

Acknowledgments

Rachel Westaway MP, Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition and Member for Prahan

Grant Kelly, President, Melbourne High School Council

Dr Tony Mordini, Principal, Melbourne High School

Sam Theodore, President, Melbourne High School Foundation

Colin Axup, President, Melbourne High School Old Boys Association

Assistant Principals

Staff and Students

Distinguished Guests

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

It is a great pleasure to join you here today.

As long as there has been Governors of Victoria, they have taken part in ceremonies to celebrate important community milestones.

Though I have had the privilege of presiding over ribbon-cuttings, plaque unveilings and tree plantings, I have not yet had the opportunity to participate in a turning of the sod.

I suppose a re-enactment of one is the next best thing.

We should consider what it represents.

While other traditions commemorate an outcome or a completion of a project – a sod turning is a little different.

Instead, it is the symbolic first act of labour in the creation of something new.

It celebrates a vision for the future, and the important first step towards attaining it.

We might think about the vision of those who stood here a century ago, in what was then a swampy marsh.

At the time, the head of the education department spoke of the aspiration to create a “fine building with the most approved arrangements for secondary school work.”

You could imagine the horse-drawn vehicles, transporting the brick and stone, which were then laid by hand, to make this fine building a reality.

It stands here still today as a testament to that aspiration, and the careful work to preserve it over time.

Yet I don't think the building itself was front of mind for those who stood here in 1926.

They were likely not thinking about the completion of the central hall, or the main entrance, or the corridors, or the sporting fields –

It's more likely they were thinking about all that would be undertaken within these grounds and within those walls.

It is, of course, a privilege to teach and learn in such beautiful and historic surrounds.

But that alone doesn't define your educational experience.

Rather, it is the curriculum, and how it is taught, the culture of learning in the classroom, and the comradeship between students that makes the greatest difference.

All those things are just as real and significant as the brick and stone.

For the students here today, while it may not be apparent now, the time you spend here will have an enduring impact on your life.

Your experiences in these halls and on these fields will become a base for your action later in life.

The rhythms of these days spent with your peers will shape your interests and values.

And the knowledge you gain will become a background to understanding the world as you make your way through it.

To make the most of these opportunities, to carry your education into action, and to use it well matters most.

That it means to 'Honour the Work.'

It may not seem so relevant to you that one hundred years ago, someone first broke the ground to start building the school you now learn in.

But in that founding act there was a vision – one of academic excellence and a well-rounded education – that has been sustained across the decades.

It is a culture you still benefit from, and contribute to, each day.

If those who were here at the turning of the sod in 1926 were with us now, I think they would be just as proud of all the students at this school as they would be of the building that still stands behind you.

Congratulations on this significant milestone as you look ahead to your centenary celebrations in 2027.

And best wishes for all your futures, and for the future of this important institution.

Thank you.