



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **COMMITTEE FOR BALLARAT ROUND TABLE DINNER**

**Thursday 11 August 2016**

**Mr Joshua Morris MLA**, Member for Western Victoria Region

**Mayor of Ballarat, Mayors of other shires and Councillors**

**Ms Janet Dore**, Chair, Committee for Ballarat

**Ms Melanie Robertson**, Chief Executive Officer, Committee for Ballarat

**Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen**

First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering and pay my respects to their elders past and present and to any elders here with us this evening.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Although born and bred in Melbourne, I do have some connections to Ballarat.

My grandmother's family settled here at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as immigrants from Russia. My grandmother, I note by way of an aside, lived until she was 101, and I know it was a constant irritant to her that, although she had lived in Australia for all but her first 5 months of life, in passport applications, census forms and the like, she could not describe herself as Australian born.

Anyway, as she was raised for much of her childhood in Ballarat, as you can well imagine, she was attached to it, and always spoke to us fondly about it.

My husband has strong familial connections here too. His father's family of 9 children lived here whilst his grandfather was the Inspector of Police in charge of licencing and gaming for the district.

And, as judges, both Tony and I have both sat on circuits here on different occasions. Tony very recently. The perspective of a criminal law judge is quite a particular one, but I know how much he has enjoyed all that this city has to offer for a month each year.

In terms of choosing a topic for this evening, the organisers did suggest that, amongst other things, I might like to talk of “Sport and Arts, and Why Both Matter”. It is indeed a topic dear to my heart, and, as such, I am more than happy to comply, before I deal with a few other favourite subjects.

## **SPORT AND ARTS**

I chose the topic of sport and the arts for an oration at the Public Library earlier this year, in a series entitled “Under the Dome”.

As I recounted in that oration, my interest in the intersection between sport and the arts was piqued about eight years ago.

I had sat down at a dinner at a friend’s home, next to a man I’d not met before. Our friend was a good hostess. Before she moved to her end of the table, she politely gave us a conversation opener.

“So and so”, she said, “Linda is an AFL Commissioner.”

I smiled towards my dinner companion. I expected things would go quite well between us. At a dinner in Melbourne, an AFL reference is usually enough to at least get things started.

And so, I was taken aback when he turned towards me with the frosty opening: “Well, I’m not the least bit interested in football. I am into the arts.”

Without pausing to think, I responded, possibly a bit too abruptly, “Sorry, I didn’t know we had to choose”.

It was a very long dinner.

I have previously noted the paradox that, when we live in a city and State that loves both sport and the arts, some people seem to show discomfort in saying that they love them both.

Although it is not compulsory to enjoy either of them, let alone both, my argument for in fact valuing both is that, first, each is quite simply a thing of beauty.

When it comes to sport, I think of Cyril Rioli’s stamina and elegance as he snaps seemingly easy goals from the boundary, the grace and exuberance of Cathy Freeman’s great win on home soil at the Sydney Olympics, the captivating tension of John Aloisi’s final penalty kick for Australia to

qualify for the Soccer World Cup for the first time in 32 years, or the pure joy of our America's Cup win in 1983.

When it comes to the arts, I think of the enigmatic smile of Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Jeffrey Smart's gritty highways, the wonder of Jeff Koons' giant floral puppy, Christo's wrapped up Grand Canyon, Margaret Atwood's perfect prose, Brahms's violin concerto in D major, or almost anything written by Giuseppe Verdi.

We know too that both sport and the arts contribute to our economy....significantly more than many people realise, I suspect.

In Victoria, the sport and recreation sector provides over \$6 billion of economic activity on an annual basis. And, over 100,000 Victorian jobs relate to art and culture. Nearly 20% of domestic travel to Victoria is due to sports events or performances and shows.

We know that sport and the arts are essential to community health and well-being. If recent trends continue, by 2025, four of every five adults, and one in every three children, will be overweight. The importance of activity is apparent. But the evidence is equally overwhelming that participating in artistic or sporting pursuits promotes a sense of connection and belonging integral to resilience and good mental health.

Nowhere are these virtues clearer than in rural and regional communities. And that is very much the case in Ballarat, home to 45 different sporting clubs, and more than 100 recreational and sporting facilities, including stadia, pavilions, fields, courts and community venues.

Of course, the development of the world-class Major Sports and Entertainment Precinct at Ballarat North – currently on track for AFL footy in 2017 - will continue to drive Ballarat's passion for sport.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Ballarat is the birthplace of many well-known Australian athletes, including runner Steve Moneghetti, tennis player Judy Dalton, football legend Mick Malthouse and, I believe that both Tony Lockett and Adam Goodes played at North Ballarat. Not a shabby roll call.

At the same time, the Art Gallery of Ballarat is the oldest and largest regional gallery in Australia. Her Majesty's Theatre is the oldest performing arts centre on the Australian mainland, home to Ballarat's live performances since 1875. And the Arts Academy in Ballarat is now renowned for training young people for a career in the performing arts.

Excitingly, in 2018, Ballarat will host a new Arts Biennale, cementing it as a major city of the arts, in Victoria, and beyond.

Ballarat also boasts an honour roll of Australian artistic and acting legends, including actors Bill Hunter and Kimberley Davies, opera singer David Hobson and award winning crime fiction writer, Peter Temple.

## **THE CHANGING FACE OF THE ECONOMY**

I want to talk a little of the changing face of the Victorian economy.

We know that we have a long-standing AAA credit rating and nearly 25 years of year on year economic growth. We know too that an extensive infrastructure program is underway, and that, although Victoria accounts for only about 3% of this country's landmass, we produce around 30% of the nation's food and fibre exports and, traditionally, about 85% of dairy exports.

We also know that we are not a State that can depend on mineral wealth. We need to be clever.

Prime Minister Turnbull has spoken of the need for Australia to become "more experienced, more innovative, more agile, more prepared to take on risk". He has called for a culture of ideas, saying it is the ideas boom that will secure our prosperity into the future.

The newly appointed Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, the Honourable Greg Hunt MP, has spoken of the need to broaden the perception that innovation is all about high-tech start-ups in big cities, stressing the importance of innovation in existing businesses across the country in "a mine site, a farm, a coffee roaster, [or] a farm supply business". He urges that innovation must be the driver of Australia's productivity, fundamental to all existing businesses.

Victoria too is prioritising innovation with LaunchVic, the Victorian Government initiative, that seeks to support and grow the vibrant and emerging startup ecosystem in Victoria that is already an important and growing part of our economy.

With innovation so much a part of the future for our State, I look forward to seeing Victoria recognised as a global centre for startups.

Catherine Livingstone AO, President of the Business Council of Australia, has repeatedly highlighted the need for education to change, to meet this age of innovation.

In her National Press Club address in 2015, she referred to science, technology, engineering and mathematics as foundation skills for primary and pre-primary education. She called too for a greater emphasis on digital literacy.

Ballarat is well placed to meet these opportunities. It is a thriving innovation hub for regional Victoria.

I note the development of the Ballarat Tech School, set to open its doors in 2018, a partnership between local schools, government, industry and Federation University. What a brilliant idea it is, to provide students from eighteen surrounding secondary schools, with the opportunity to develop the very STEM skills that are needed.

The Ballarat Technology Park too, now over 20 years old, supports emerging and existing tech-based enterprises, and has provided a significant economic contribution to the area (estimated to be \$300 million). Impressively, it supports around 700 full-time jobs, equivalent to almost 5% of full-time jobs in Ballarat city.

I note that the recent State budget also included \$4.2 million for the Ballarat Innovation Lab and Digital Space, expected to bring many information and communication technology jobs to Ballarat.

### **HEALTH, MEDICAL, PHARMACEUTICAL**

In addition to the growing innovation in our State, in my first year as Governor, I have been exposed to the extraordinary work in the areas of health and medical research in our State.

I have visited and spoken with doctors, scientists and researchers at numerous medical institutions. I have toured Melbourne hospitals, and country hospitals too. I have seen the industry built around the health and medical research in the Parkville Precinct and in other parts of our State.

And I have been privileged to represent Victoria in other countries where leaders have readily congratulated us on our bio-medical prowess, and have discussed the international collaborations that they are forging.

As you are of course well aware, Ballarat is at the heart of health care in our State, as Western Victoria's largest provider. It delivers services to a community of more than 250,000 people over an area that spans 48,000 square kilometres. The health and community sector is the largest employer in the region.

I understand that the City of Ballarat and the Victorian Government are working towards an integrated plan for the development of a Health and Knowledge Precinct in Ballarat, to cater for an expanding population, and to address the region's future health care needs.

I see the Committee for Ballarat's eHealth project as an excellent example of Ballarat looking to innovation as the means to improve health outcomes.

The project brings together a diverse range of stakeholders in health care, to share information and work towards secure electronic transfer of patient information between GPs, specialists and hospitals, to reduce demand on health services and, most importantly, to improve patient support and care.

### **DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL HARMONY**

I want to talk about diversity, and social harmony. I admit that I choose to talk about them often.

I believe in diversity, not because it is politically correct, nor because it is a box that must be ticked. Not even just because it is fair.

There is a strong body of unequivocal research that organisations with genuine diversity within them, perform at a higher level. It stands to reason. Different skills, different experiences, different life views can only add to the strength of decisions that would otherwise be one-dimensional.

The Credit Suisse Research Institute concluded, over a 10 year period of research, that boards with "higher than average" representation of women, for example, outperformed boards with "below average" representation – by nearly 40%.

When it comes to women, I cannot let the opportunity pass to note that, right now, in 2016, women in this country still receive 18% less pay than men, (that is, close to \$300 per week), and according to the World Economic Forum, Australia ranks down at 36<sup>th</sup> overall in gender equality, well behind countries such as Rwanda, The Philippines, Namibia and Latvia.

Further, when it comes to diversity, the last census showed us that more than one quarter of Victorians were born overseas in more than 200 countries, and heading towards half of all Victorians were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas. Victorians speak more than 260 languages and dialects and follow 135 religious faiths. And nearly a quarter of us speak a language other than English when we are at home.

Ballarat is home to over 8,000 residents who were born overseas, making up about 9% of the total Ballarat population. In that respect, the cultural diversity of this city is not as broad as in Melbourne, for example, but it is rapidly increasing, with over 20% of your overseas residents having arrived in this last decade.

Harmony Fest, now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year, is a successful example of how Ballarat is promoting social harmony and cohesion. This year's festival started with a spectacular 'Parade of Cultures' from the Town Hall, followed by a vibrant live concert with international food, workshops, games, demonstrations, children's activities and markets.

It is events like these that unite a community, bringing together different cultural traditions in a celebration of diversity and harmony. These are ideals towards which we all need to continue to work our hardest, to ensure that they are woven into the everyday life and fabric of each city and region.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

We all know the importance of the volunteers who freely give their time to almost every aspect of community life that we can name. They contribute across the broadest range of areas – emergency services, arts and heritage, community welfare, education and training, the environment, health, and sport and recreation – to name just some.

It is estimated that, each year, more than 1.5 million Victorian volunteers contribute around 200 million hours of work for the benefit of our community, work that equates to a contribution of around \$23 billion to our economy.

But the true importance of volunteers cannot be measured by numbers alone.

Can you imagine what a weekend in our State might look like without them?

When it comes to local sports clubs, they would simply disappear – without coaches, umpires, runners, or the stalwarts who run the canteens. And of course, how could children keep playing, without the nourishment of a neatly segmented orange at half-time?

Our famous public events would be without first aid, our pensioners without their freshly delivered meals, (and the friendly face that arrives with them), our vision-impaired without the chance to hear

the news read to them over their radios, and our new arrivals without a patient guide in language and culture to help them settle. Of course, our emergency services would be diminished too.

Imagine, if you possibly can, a weekend without one raffle ticket on sale. No working bees for exhausted parents to attend. Worse, not even the faintest smell of a sausage sizzle anywhere in the State!

It would be a Victoria we simply wouldn't be able to recognise.

The last census showed us that at least one in five Victorians regularly volunteered their time. In Ballarat it was one in four. A quarter of the population supporting their community. What a testament to the generosity of spirit in this city.

## **CONCLUSION**

Talking of volunteers, let me conclude by recognising the Committee for Ballarat for its hard work on behalf of this city and region.

I know your Chair, Janet Dore. More accurately, I know both sides of your Chair. I know the sane and competent side that I met through the TAC, and I know the irrational and emotional footy fan that I have seen, many times, at the football.

I commend the Committee for its breadth of vision across industries, old and new, and its understanding of the need to embrace diversity of people, ideas and interests in order to build the strongest possible foundations upon which you can all prosper.

Congratulations, and thank you for including me in the list of dauntingly talented people who have addressed these round table dinners in recent years.