



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

SWAN HILL CIVIC RECEPTION
Thursday 2 May 2024

Acknowledgments

Cr Stuart King, Mayor
Swan Hill Rural City Councillors
Scott Barber, CEO
Distinguished guests

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

It is a pleasure to join you this evening.

Tonight's event is one of many I have attended on this regional tour.

The itinerary has given me the opportunity to meet Victorians from a range of organisations and industries.

Local artists, hospitality workers, educators, and agricultural workers, to name a few, have taken the time to explain their work and the impact it has in their community.

The role that regional and rural Victoria plays in our State's economic and cultural prosperity is an important one.

One in four Victorians live in a rural or regional area.

Collectively, these communities are home to 21.9% of our State's small businesses and make up 19.5% of our total economy.

Here in Swan Hill that economic contribution is influenced by from agricultural, horticultural, viticultural and tourism businesses.

I am not the first Governor to recognise the importance of Victoria's rural communities.

The Right Honourable John Adrian Louise Hope, the Earl of Hopetoun, travelled to Swan Hill in 1890 to formally open the railway between Swan Hill and Kerang.

Having recently arrived in Australia, Hopetoun was keen to explore and promote the unique offerings of regional Victoria.

Addressing an assembly of community representatives, the Governor noted that he was likely the first in his role to visit the region and spoke of its "*wonderful future*" as a place where "*the ingenuity of man conquered the difficulties of nature.*"

This prediction had better success than others.

Hopetoun demonstrated an innate optimism when, in the same speech, he predicted that rabbits would likely be extinct from the region "*in the next few years.*"

While his second prediction wasn't realised, he was right to promote the town's natural surrounds as the source of future prosperity.

Thank you for hosting us this evening and for the warm welcome from so many parts of your community.

I look forward to speaking with more of you.