



GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA

Thank you for your responses to our recent message about the COVID-19 crisis.

From them, we can see that, for some of you, this crisis has placed your staff and volunteers under enormous pressure – never have you been busier. We thank you for your tireless efforts on behalf of your fellow Victorians.

From other responses, we understand that you may be feeling less productive than usual, social distancing rules having temporarily closed down your programs or activities, or precluded your members from getting together as you normally would.

If you are in that second category, you are not alone. Naturally, our program here at Government House also has had to dramatically change, with the temporary cancellation of events and our visits across the State. But we have been implementing new ways to stay in touch with the community, particularly with those who might feel somewhat isolated right now.

One of these new initiatives is a program of letter writing, which aims, in a small way, to build greater community connection during these difficult times.

We are contacting various organisations to see if they would welcome receiving letters addressed to individuals or groups with whom they interact. We are mindful that they will know many people whose usual social contact has necessarily come to a halt, including in local community groups, cultural and faith groups, mothers' groups, bowls and many other recreational clubs, and in aged care settings. And that list is by no means exhaustive.

Of course, for privacy reasons, we have not asked for individual contact details for the letter recipients. Instead, we have been given first names or, where no names are given, the number of recipients in the group who would welcome a letter. We are then able to bundle the letters together, to send to the organisation to send on to their members.

It has occurred to us that some of our Patronages might welcome the opportunity to be involved in this program. We are conscious that you will have your own local community contacts and that, amongst your own members, you will already have contacts and ideas of where to start.

For those interested and able to participate in this program, you can do it in different ways. Some of you might prefer to put pen to paper and to mail a letter through the post. However, to avoid postal expenses and to minimise the need for anyone to head out to the Post Office or a letter box during these times of social distancing, a handwritten letter can be scanned and emailed, making the process as simple as it can possibly be.

Finally, we would be pleased to hear how you go. You might have some happy stories to share - the better for all of us at this difficult time.

The best contact point for further information in the Office of the Governor is Will Zhong, at william.zhong@govhouse.vic.gov.au

We again thank you and wish you well.

The Hon. Linda Dessau AC

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