



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## RECEPTION FOR THE REICHSTEIN FOUNDATION

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2014**

**Ms Jill Reichstein**, Chair, Reichstein Foundation

**Dr John Spierings**, Chief Executive Officer, Reichstein Foundation

**Mr Peter Seidel**, who works with the Foundation and other bodies in the charitable sector, and from whom we will hear shortly

**Other distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to Government House to mark the contribution to our community by the Reichstein Foundation during the past 40 or so years.

Given the public importance of its work, it is appropriate that this be recognised in this house that was built essentially to facilitate such events. Before Government House was built, and even before the colonists came here, this land was cared for by its indigenous people. I acknowledge that, and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Ordinarily a society that claims to be civilised has, within its structure, a process that supports those who, through no fault of theirs, experience disadvantage or hardship and are unable to help themselves in that regard. In our community, putting aside government, charities and like philanthropic organisations play an important role in alleviating this situation. It is in this area that the Reichstein Foundation, led primarily by its chair, Jill Reichstein, plays an important role.

In the brief time available it is not possible to summarise adequately the contributions that this body makes to our society. Much can be learned about this, however, by looking at its vision at the time of establishment and then seeing how it changed focus so as to provide the kind of benefits that it does today. Many of you may know that the Foundation was established in 1970 by Ms Reichstein's

late father, Lance Reichstein, the successful Victorian industrialist and Councillor of the City of Melbourne. He took this step because he wanted to give back to the community which, he said, helped him to create his wealth. At his death in 1980, the Foundation became the principal beneficiary of his estate.

During the chairmanship of its founder, and for some time thereafter, the Foundation was concerned primarily with assisting traditional charitable organisations, such as hospitals and the like. Not long after the founder's daughter took over as chair of the Foundation in the 1980s, there was a significant change in the philanthropic activities of the organisation.

Taking the view that many of the traditional charities addressed symptoms rather than causes, and being driven by the motto "change not charity", Ms Reichstein steered the Foundation to focus on philanthropy that facilitates positive social change whereby those in need have the opportunity to improve their lives. Thus, it has supported a range of programmes that were community-based and were related to the fundamental issues at that level.

In its own right, and in strategic collaboration with other foundations and private donors, as well as other pro bono workers and volunteers, the Foundation has positively helped many in our community such as women and children who have experienced family violence, people with a disability, indigenous Australians, refugees and asylum seekers, just to name some.

In some cases the Foundation took risks and funded projects other philanthropists would not fund. Although it has acknowledged having made the odd mistake, this has in no way detracted from its success in facilitating the provision of meaningful assistance to many vulnerable members of our society.

Ms Reichstein and the Foundation have also played an important leadership role in facilitating a broader understanding of social change philanthropy and in encouraging and assisting other philanthropic organisations and individuals to follow a like path. In many ways, the philosophy and work of the Foundation has encouraged many of the new generation of philanthropists to become involved by way of social investment and social entrepreneurship. The influence of Ms Reichstein in that regard has been telling.

Thus, the Foundation's vision and hands on social philanthropy has had a significant beneficial impact upon our community and it is this achievement that we are celebrating today. As Governor of Victoria and on behalf of all Victorians I congratulate and thank the Foundation for its work.

I now call on Mr Peter Seidel who will be followed by Ms Reichstein.

**Alex Chernov**