

**Opening statement
Additional Budget Estimates (February 2022)**

Thank you, Chair.

Paul Singer, Official Secretary to the Governor-General.

When I last appeared before the Committee in October, I summarised the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley's program of virtual engagement during the lock-down period.

I said at the time, while the 'how' changed, the 'what' and 'why' had not.

The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley continued to speak with front-line health and mental health workers, local government and community leaders, staff and volunteers of the organisations of which they serve as Patrons, students studying on-line and members of the community.

I am proud of the way my Office has responded to the pandemic and supported the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley to successfully continue an impactful and COVID-safe program of activity.

The purpose, as always, has been to recognise and celebrate those in our community who give, serve and make the lives of those around them better.

Key highlights include presentation ceremonies for the National Emergency Medal in Dubbo and on the South Coast of NSW, and over the weekend, in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island. In coming months the Governor-General will also conduct ceremonies in Queensland, northern New South Wales and Victoria.

These presentations continue the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley's ongoing connection to the communities that were devastated by the fires. Through video conferences, phone calls, letters and visits they continue to engage regularly with these communities and it will remain a priority throughout their term.

Another highlight was attending the Australia National Day at Expo 2020 Dubai to promote Australia, our investment opportunities and our education sector.

The successful visit, which also included meetings senior leaders, marked a return to Their Excellencies representing Australia at appropriate occasions overseas.

Another recent highlight was the announcement of the Australia Day Honours list.

Pleasingly, the list included the highest ever percentage of awards in the General Division of the Order of Australia to women - 47 per cent.

This reflects the priority the Governor-General has placed on increasing awareness of and engagement with the Order of Australia – particularly in parts of our community that have been historically underrepresented in nominations and therefore awards.

I am pleased that in the Mid-Year Economic and Financial Outlook my Office received funding to progress this work.

Incorporating outreach and engagement into the administration of the Order is a step change. It will allow my Office to encourage high-quality nominations for outstanding Australians from all parts of our community.

We expect this work to both continue the positive trend of more awards for women and to increase nominations, for example, for individuals from multicultural and Indigenous backgrounds.

Our Honours system will reflect the great diversity and strength of Australia.

Chair, a final update, on the Kirribilli Point Re-Stabilisation Precinct. The project is substantively complete. The success of what was an incredibly complex project will ensure the preservation of Kirribilli Point and the Marine Barracks, and therefore, an important part of our history.

<pause>

Chair, while the last months have presented challenges, I'm proud of how the Office has responded. We're fortunate in supporting Their Excellencies to witness the remarkable diversity, achievement and character of the Australian people.

It is motivating and inspiring and I thank each of my team for their efforts.

<pause>

Finally, I wish to provide advice to the Committee with regard to the Senate Order for production of documents related to unanswered questions on notice:

- Three questions were taken on notice by the Office during the Budget Estimates and 15 written questions on notice were received after the last hearing.
- Responses to all questions were sent to the Senate Committee by the nominated due date.

Thank you Chair.