

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
**AFTERNOON TEA FOR MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN 2008 OLYMPIC AND
PARALYMPIC TEAMS**
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
23 SEPTEMBER 2008

Michael and I offer you the warmest of welcomes to Government House this afternoon on this lovely Canberra Spring Day.

I can't tell you how thrilled and delighted I am to have the opportunity to meet you and to congratulate you on behalf of Australians across our Country on your marvellous, successful and exciting participation in the Beijing Games.

We Australians love our sporting champions and none more than our Olympians and Paralympians.

The sense of pride we take in your efforts and your achievements is a significant aspect of our society.

- It brings us together
- It engages us with each other like nothing else does
- It gives an extraordinary spirit of sharing and a sense of belonging across all ages, backgrounds and walks of life.
- It is the greatest conversation starter - in the lift - on the street 'how do you think we will go in the rowing tonight?'

As I am sure you know, we think we own you.

We follow everything you do. We send you off with the highest hopes, a deep sense of admiration as well as anticipation.

For what you stand for:

- Those shared values that are important to us
- Dedication, commitment, hard work, courage, determination, stickability - being in there for the long haul.
- The tenacity and fortitude that you demonstrate again and again.

We can only imagine the sacrifices

- All those things that you give up to pursue excellence
- To be striving for your best
- The isolation of constant training
- Captured so well in that evocative title - 'The loneliness of the long-distance runner'.

What outstanding examples you are to all of us and especially to our young ones:

- The physical and mental strength
- The vitality that shines through.

Thank you for what you do for our community, for our country:

- Uplifting us
- Energising us
- Inspiring us.

My friends,

You are now part of our proud sporting history - memories will endure of your extraordinary efforts on:

- The court
- The field
- The pool.

Like all Aussie kids of the fifties, I found my first heroines in the 56 Melbourne games, the golden girls we called them. I have followed their lives with great affection ever since.

As we will yours.

Ladies and gentlemen

I want to express our particular debt of gratitude to all involved in the Paralympics in Beijing - how exhilarating it was to see the support given in every aspect, it represented a new era.

As the China Daily put it last week: 'There are no obstacles to a true heart and soaring aspirations'

And I want to congratulate the ABC on the fantastic coverage it gave to the Paralympics. The commentators were absolutely brilliant with the highest levels of professionalism.

My friends, to all of you I say

- We congratulate you
- We thank you
- We wish you well, today and always.