

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
LAUNCH OF THE GARNAUT CLIMATE CHANGE REVIEW FINAL REPORT 2008
WOODWARD CONFERENCE CENTRE, MELBOURNE LAW SCHOOL
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I acknowledge the traditional keepers of the land on which we gather, and thank you for welcoming me today.

It is a wonderful thing for me to be in this great place.

I spent 20 years in my Law School at UQ and one of the most significant influences on me across those years was the distinguished scholar and leader of this Law School, Sir Zelman Cowen, who wrote several of the texts we studied and was later my Vice Chancellor.

I think of him today, as I do so often, with respect and affection and as a source of inspiration in my current role.

My friends, over the days and evenings of last week, as Michael and I journeyed through the northern region of the Murray Darling Basin, we were treated to the warmest of welcomes at every stop.

Women and men, young people, families, elders and leaders, paused in the midst of their troubled times to open their arms to us and lead us into their lives and communities.

How privileged and humbled we were to pull up a chair at the table, share a blanket on the riverbank, get sand in our shoes, even have a few laughs, with these people whose livelihoods and spirits have been almost eviscerated by the workings of drought, fire, flood, acid mud and human action over many decades.

We have an obligation in public office to endeavour to understand the human face of hardship and suffering, the private dimension to widespread crisis.

We must listen to the stories that are so bravely shared, and draw upon the depth and diversity of opinion and experience that is the fabric of our communities and Australian life.

It is especially important in challenging times to allow room for these conversations, to encourage public questioning and debate, not only to ensure that we feel we've been heard, but to explore ground upon which we might be prepared to stand and work together.

Professor Ross Garnaut's report comes after more than twelve months of exchange around our nation:

- . formal submissions, public forums, and lectures;
- . willing and engaged individuals, specialists, councillors and parliamentarians, businesses and community groups, participating in the democratic process that is so valued by Australians.

The issues are immensely complex, the stakes are high no matter the choices we make, and time is largely not on our side.

Change, whatever that may ultimately consist of, is inevitable.

I've said again and again in my recent travels that I have enormous confidence that we will get through this.

This is no flippant conjecture; rather, it is based on my belief in our proven and growing capacity to apply our collective talents and expertise to the machinery and soul of change.

In his report, Ross Garnaut forecasts the whole of the genius of humanity contributing to innovation in the global economy.

Invention, he says, will occur in more places and, more than ever before, invention in one part of the world will move quickly to enrich the whole.

My confidence is based too on my belief in our capacity for leadership and public service at every layer of our society: from the grass roots in our communities, to our board rooms, our universities, our parliaments, and our international delegations.

People who carry a vast burden of responsibility, care, and public scrutiny in gathering facts, facilitating discussion, responding to censure, and tendering advice.

They place themselves at the centre of the things that mean the most to us, and for which we will fiercely fight.

They accept that ideas can divide us, and equally, galvanise and mobilise us.

They are so critical to our communities evolving and taking shape.

Ladies and gentlemen, as Australia acquires a new maturity and sophistication, a more discerning view of itself and the world, I believe we are well equipped as leaders, observers and participants in change.

I express my appreciation for the efforts of Professor Garnaut and his team, and in now launching the Final Report of the Garnaut Climate Change Review, I invite all Australians to be part of one the most important conversations we are ever likely to have.