



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

ROTARY CLUB OF MELBOURNE
“2012 YOUNG ACHIEVERS AWARDS”

21 March 2012

The Right Reverend Peter Hollingworth, Former
Governor General of Australia

Mr Austen Burleigh, President, Rotary Club of
Melbourne, and **Mrs Sue Burleigh**

District Governors

Rotarians

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to be with you here today to celebrate the
success and achievements of three young Victorians, Amit
Menghani, Sarah Spottiswood and Andrew Asten.

And I acknowledging the traditional owners of this land, the Kulin Nations, and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Importantly, the achievements of the three Award winners go beyond success in their chosen fields of endeavour. They have also made significant contributions to our society in other areas. I believe that their attitude and willingness to work outside their envelope or comfort zone for the benefit of the community is reflective of the attitude of many, and a growing number of, young Victorians who consider that giving their time to assist others is an integral part of their lives rather than an exception. Such voluntary contributions to community contradict the often heard claim that the values of our young generation are diminishing.

In effect, these young Victorians recognise and give effect to the morals and values that underpin our society. They also embody the drive, confidence and self-respect that each of us hopes for our children and grandchildren, and they show great initiative and awareness in utilising these skills to advocate for those less able to do so for themselves. These young adults are the future leaders of our communities and it is comforting to know that these

are the principles they will espouse as they assume more responsibility.

It is true that joint efforts and partnerships are required if we are to deal successfully with obstacles and challenges that are beyond the resources or ability of one, or few, to overcome. But in the every day context of our society, the power of one, or the power of very few, to make a positive difference to the community should never be underestimated. Every contribution, no matter how small, counts and has the cumulative effect of improving our community. Look at the impact that Mother Teresa had on so many. As she said:

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples”.

So in speaking about today's three young Victorian achievers, I want to focus not so much on what they have attained in terms of their professional development – you will hear about that from Hugh Bucknall, Chair of the Vocational Service Committee – but rather on how some of their professional and social endeavours have contributed more broadly to their communities.

Amit Menghani receives his award for achievement in aeronautical engineering. Can I digress for a moment and share with you a good news story for Melbourne in particular, that relates to this sophisticated industry. Many of you will be surprised to know that Victoria has a significant aviation industry that leads the country in this field and serves as a major contributor to jobs, economic activity and research and development in Victoria. The sector exports millions of dollars in products and services each year and employs thousands of people. Melbourne's established aerospace precinct is at our city's doorstep at Fisherman's Bend and consists of manufacturers, design organisations, education and research facilities. They focus mainly on producing low quantity but very high quality, products such as the critical flaps and elevators that are made of composite material. They are then assembled in Seattle to form part of Boeing aeroplanes. It is amazing to think that these critical flaps, the operation of which effectively steers the aeroplane, are precision made in our backyard.

GippsAero, with whom Amit is employed, is located in Gippsland and actually assembles aircraft there, some parts of which are made at their premises at Fisherman's Bend. It is part of one of the largest manufacturing

companies in India, the Mahindra Group. GippsAir is a key player in this industry and is the only commercial aircraft manufacturer in the country.

Quite apart from his expertise in this field, Amit is also being recognised for cross cultural leadership in facilitating the bridging of relationships between Indian students and the Victorian community. Latest figures show that Australia is a temporary home to almost 80,000 Indian nationals studying here – 29,000 of them having arrived this past year. This represents 21 percent of all international students in Australia and remarkably, although unsurprisingly given the high standard of our educational institutions, 43 percent of them are enrolled in an academic institution in Victoria. It is obvious therefore that a strong and open relationship between those students and the rest of the community is essential. The same can be said of the need for Victoria to be a safe and welcoming environment for, amongst others, Indian students, who contribute to the rich multicultural fabric of Victorian society and to our growing reputation as a knowledge city.

A student at RMIT, Amit received a number of awards that recognised his significant contribution to student activities

there, including improving the relationship with Indian students. He was National President of the Federation of Indian Students during 2009-2011 and attended to many of the student needs during the 2010 problems in Melbourne in particular. And he has continued to make a mark in this important area.

Both Sarah Spottiswood and Andrew Asten are today acknowledged for their work emanating from their legal background. More specifically, it is appropriate to recognise this afternoon their involvement with various not-for-profit organisations. Sarah, who is a law student, has last year worked for three weeks at the Womens' Aid Organisation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a body which seeks to promote and create respect, protection and fulfilment of equal rights for women. She also works as a volunteer with the Victorian Women's Lawyers that strives for gender equality, supporting the role of women in the legal profession. Her contributions to the development of gender equality in these and other areas are likely to have far reaching effect.

Andrew's great work with the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic should also be mentioned. As it happens, I discussed with Dr Hollingworth at this launch our

respective experience with homeless men in the State Library. During the time we spent there many of the homeless men came into the library to shelter from rain and they were probably the best read people in Melbourne.

Alarming, the 2006 census showed that, over 23,000 Victorians were counted as homeless with around 2,000 people “sleeping rough”, i.e. without shelter. Almost half of these were young people under 24 years of age. In 2008-09, 58,600 Victorians accessed homelessness services. Sadly, it is anticipated that this number will grow, particularly in light of the current financial climate. That so many Victorians are suffering from such adversity is distressing and the Homeless Persons Legal Clinic is so important in providing relief. It takes daily measures to prevent these issues from continuing and from happening in the first place.

Through Oaktree Foundation, which he joined in 2007, Andrew oversaw the implementation of aid and development programmes into 21 of South Africa’s poorest schools and developed an engagement programme with Australian schools.

The point about all three of the Young Achievers is that they don't just talk about what they do, but do it without much talk about it. As Jean Vainer said:

“They are the ones who make the community live”.

Their work and that of their peers is important, and impacts positively on our community in a range of areas and industries, translating into tangible enhancements to the lives of Victorians.

I congratulate each of the recipients on their award today. You are entitled to feel proud of all you have achieved personally and as contributors to the community. I wish you well in all your future work and every best wish and success for the years ahead.

Alex Chernov