

ADDRESS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**OFFICIAL OPENING AND BLESSING AT THE ST PETER'S GREEN RESIDENTIAL AGED  
CARE FACILITY**  
LANE COVE NORTH, SYDNEY  
2 AUGUST 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, I acknowledge the traditional keepers of this land, and their successors:

the Diocese of Broken Bay

and Catholic Healthcare

the custodians of this marvellous new community and service centre for the aged

where today we celebrate a long and important history of Catholic community service

and the expression of the Gospel of Jesus in so many life affirming ways.

What a wonderful feeling it is when the faith and values we hold so dear produce the tangible and inspiring results we see here at St Peter's Green.

Dedicated, superbly trained staff.

Gorgeous surrounds.

Thoughtful, intelligent, attractive design.

Proximity to the excellent facilities and amenities of the lower north shore area.

And an ethos of positive, respectful, flexible care that shines through every aspect of living here and responds to the needs and aspirations of individuals.

Care that places your residents - their health and wellbeing, their dignity and worth - at its heart.

I was reading recently about the work of Dr Hans Becker, the Chair of the Humanitas Foundation in the Netherlands.

He has become internationally renown for his development of the Apartments for Life model of housing and care for older people.

His essential philosophy is:

be boss of your own life

use it or lose it

an extended family approach

and a 'yes' culture.

I can see this approach here at St Peter's too.

Dr Becker also talks about human happiness - that is the business we're in, he says, not 'cure and care'.

He spoke more about Happiness the Becker Way when he toured Australia last year:

To be a person amongst people, you need to meet people, mingle, share something.

The attention needs to be taken away from people's handicaps and instead focused on what people can do and what they enjoy.

Constant focus on medical problems causes what is left of a positive image of life to disappear, and institutions for the elderly to degenerate into what my father calls 'misery islands'.

These sentiments are both passionate and pragmatic.

It's what we would imagine that society would want for its ageing members.

Sadly however, we can't assume this is the case.

Earlier this year, Deakin University released a report, Respect in an Ageing Society. The report found that:

the lifetime divide between young and old

and the capacity of Gen Ys to earn high incomes early

mean that young people have less reliance on family and less respect for the contribution and value of the older generation.

And yet it's clear from the study that respect is a key factor that determines quality of life for older people:

their life satisfaction

sense of usefulness

and involvement with community and loved ones.

Indeed, these things are vital to all of us and we must as a society work to ensure:

that they are preserved and insisted upon

that we hold onto human happiness.

Friends, it fills me with such joy and hope to be here with you today.

To acknowledge the potential of this place to bring joy and hope to so many lives.

And to commend the worthy and proper care of older Australians.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to now declare open St Peter's Green Residential Aged Care.

And, with Longfellow's words, to simply rejoice in ageing:

For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress,  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

Friends, thank you.