

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
**OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE COMCAR CENTENARY HISTORY, GOING THE EXTRA
MILE**
COMCAR DEPOT, FYSHWICK, ACT
11 AUGUST 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, I am really delighted to join you here today:

for the start of COMCAR's centenary celebrations

and the launch of your superbly documented history.

What a wonderful opportunity it is to capture a hundred years:

of Australian social and political life

and of fine public service by men and women of this country

from their unique perspective, literally, at the wheels of government.

In all the years that I have been a client of COMCAR myself - since 1978:

as a member of Commonwealth Advisory Councils, Boards, Commissions

as a Commonwealth Public Servant and Public Office holder

it has struck me how easy it is for us to take seamless service for granted.

To be treated courteously and patiently, no matter how late or how long the journey.

To be engaged by easy, genial conversation.

To be allowed a respectful space to focus and prepare, or to relax at the end of a long day.

And to be delivered to the right spot, on time, unflustered, and ready for the task ahead.

This is the sort of service that we tend to expect and forget when we have it, and to wake up to when we don't.

Going the Extra Mile is a title that reminds us of that subtle layer of excellence that has distinguished the service of COMCAR drivers and staff since Prime Minister Fisher ordered the purchase of the first government vehicle in 1910.

For a new democracy in a growing nation across a vast land, the logistics of attending to the business of government were always going to need some careful thought and long term, reliable solutions.

It was from there that the outstanding COMCAR service was built, and a legion of professionals came together to carry out their despatches.

And while COMCAR is a volume of marvellous stories of individual Australians:

their special mix of affability and training

their contribution, loyalty and untiring work ethic,

these stories are part of a broader landscape too

one that reveals the evolution of a nation.

In the decades following the commissioning of your inaugural car, the Commonwealth Car Service met the needs of government through two world wars and the difficult intervening years.

You transported members of the armed forces, carried messages and supplies, and took the ground-breaking step of employing your first female drivers in a traditionally male industry.

Friends, I know that we are fortunate to have with us today the ACT's pioneer women drivers, Robyn Mackenzie and Agnes Austin.

An inspirational symbol to me:

of the strength and closeness of the COMCAR community

your organisation's early and sustained understanding of client needs, and the value you place on the skills and qualities that men and women bring to a workforce and a workplace culture.

In the post World War Two years, COMCAR provided vital transport for our ex-service people who needed help getting to and from hospital and medical appointments.

From the 1960s through the 70s and 80s, the service expanded across the country responding to the demands of the Australian government, the judiciary and the public service.

And from the 1990s to the present, economics has dictated a more commercial approach to the business and grace of people conveyance.

And of course, your history book relates some fascinating stories of COMCAR's central role in ushering royalty, dignitaries and prominent Australians in times of celebration and crisis.

Throughout these decades COMCAR has demonstrated an aptitude for initiative, flexibility and professionalism that has assured:

its capacity to adapt to changing times and circumstances,

and hence its enduring success.

It's often been said that our cars are an expression - a projection - of who we are.

New age language even goes so far as to describe them as our means of 'personal emotional mobility'.

We might chuckle at that, but I think it is quite true.

In fact, it is the ethos around which COMCAR has grown.

An ethos that requires that in every aspect of its service - tangible and intangible - the highest level of support, respect and attention is given to the mechanics of performing official duties.

That appearances do matter, and the substance and values of public office, and those who hold them, are thereby duly acknowledged.

Ladies and gentlemen, the history of COMCAR is an important reflection on the work of an esteemed Australian institution and its people over a century.

It is my great pleasure to officially launch Going the Extra Mile.