

Speech

Address By

Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

On the occasion of

Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering Clunies Ross Awards

Brisbane
19 May 2011

Remarks by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, AC

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

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Treasurer and Minister for State Development and
Trade

The Honourable Andrew Fraser MP

President, Academy of Technology Sciences and
Engineering

Professor Robin Batterham

Major General Adrian Clunies-Ross

Distinguished guests

Award recipients

I am thrilled to join you for the presentation of the 2011 Clunies Ross Awards.

This 20th anniversary allows us

to reflect on the lives of three great Australians who inspired this event:

Sir Ian Clunies Ross: visionary, leader, and a giant of Australian science;

Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet:

Nobel Prize winner – much loved by those who worked with him, and

Sir Owen Dixon, Chief Justice of the High Court for 12 years;

one of our country's greatest jurists and finest legal

minds.

I thank you for too, for the opportunity
to celebrate excellence and innovation.

To honour exceptional Australians,
devoted scientists, physicists, engineers,
whose outstanding and enduring personal
commitment,
have advanced industry,
created new business,
solved community problems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am one of those non-scientists,
and we are everywhere, who has
become hooked on science.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many,
like today's award recipients,
who have opened the doors to

a fascinating new world.

One that I used to feel excluded from
and uncertain about –

like a lot of girls of the 50s,
I didn't have much of a chance to study science.

But that has been changed for me.

First, by those engaging communicators at the helm
of brilliant programs:

The Science Show,
Catalyst,
the Discovery Channel,
The Naked Scientist.

They enthrall and excite me
with possibilities we could never have imagined.

Then there were my brilliant science scholars at The
Women's College,
at the University of Sydney,

Studying for their higher degrees in testing fields of:

- nanotechnology,
- neuroscience;
- robotics,
- epigenetics.

In turn, I found for them engaging mentors and role models for their careers.

People who would encourage their aspirations, share experiences with practical no nonsense advice.

Our young scientists and engineers need sound financial and professional support if they are to fulfill their potential,

and make the best contributions they can to research and to discovery.

Also of course I am indebted to our internationally renowned researchers,

who I am privileged to know through their leadership of our leading institutes.

People like:

- Professor Ian Frazer
- Professor Michael Good
- Dr Adele Green
- Elizabeth Blackburn: Australia's first female

Nobel laureate who discovered how chromosomes are copied and protected when cells divide, and what happens when the process goes wrong

- Dame Valerie Beral: whose Million Women's Study is the largest in the world
- Dame Bridget Ogilvie: dedicated to biomedical research and passionate about global health.

I love to listen to their:

- riveting descriptions
- complex investigations
- detailed observations.

Australians are so proud of the achievements of our

great thinkers...

...even if we don't all appreciate their long road to success:

I remember one of Professor Good's sons saying;

- “Dad, you have been looking for a vaccination for malaria for 20 years, you can't be much good at it.”

Indeed, scientific discoveries are frequently achieved across a lifetime,

for little financial reward, and

so often in a vacuum.

Sir Ian Clunies Ross understood well the long haul, perseverance, dedication.

We see that in the intent of these Awards,

In the recognition of a person who has achieved:

- “... often against difficulties and always with persistent commitment...”

Sir Ian believed, wholeheartedly, that science could transform society for good ends.

My friends

Australians have proved him right:

Professor Ian Frazer’s cervical cancer vaccine will prevent millions of women developing the disease.

Professor Graeme Clark’s Bionic Ear, has given the gift of hearing to more than 300,000 people across the globe.

I offer my warmest congratulations to today’s winners

And my admiration for the

Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering.

In presenting these pre-eminent awards,

they recognise the need to create heroes for young people and the community.

They enhance an innovation culture through training networks and case studies for industry.

What this does is,

inspire and advance Australia's prosperity.

Thank you for what you do for our community – for our country.

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