Speech

Address By

His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

On the occasion of

Presentation of blazers to ACT Members of the Australian Team competing in the 15th World Transplant Games, Ontario, Canada

Canberra, ACT
6 July 2005

Mr Mark Cocks, Chief Executive officer, Transplant Australia
Robert, Lisa, Nick and Damian
Ladies and gentlemen

Marlena and I are delighted to welcome you all to Government House; and what a great day for our four ACT athletes Rob, Lisa, Nick and Damian.

To wear the colours of your country is a genuine pinnacle of achievement, and so congratulations to each of you on representing Australia at the fifteenth World Transplant Games in London, Ontario.

Rob, Lisa, Nick and Damian are members of an Australian team of eighty-five athletes who will be meeting and competing with representatives from more than fifty-five countries, each of them demonstrating the strength and magnificence of the human spirit, and proof positive that organ donation works.

Last September I had the privilege to open Australia’s national transplant games in Adelaide, and like that wonderful event, the World Transplant Games truly celebrates a second chance of life, sending a powerful message to the wider community about the value of organ donation and transplants.

When we consider that athletes compete in their specialist event, and in four other events over nine days, these Games are a remarkable showcase of personal courage and achievement.

As we all know, Australians very much enjoy participating in great occasions such as world sporting events: the spirited competition, reconnecting with old friends, making new contacts, achieving the excellence of personal bests.

But as a nation I would suggest that we value equally the extreme human courage, the generosity of spirit, and the mental and physical battle to triumph over seemingly impossible odds. That’s the essence of the World Transplant Games.

What an inspiring expression of life, of determination and will power, and of personal sacrifice, are symbolised in the Games. But it is also an occasion characterised with an abiding sense of gratitude to the families of organ and tissue donors.

The Games are a testament to the greatest gift one human can bestow on another, the gift of life.

In addition to enjoying competition and striving for more personal bests, competitors will be meeting with counterparts from all over the world with similar experiences. Undoubtedly they will enjoy the camaraderie that only people who have shared such similar experiences can forge. And they will make new friends as the Transplant Games network spreads.

Ladies and gentlemen. I was very pleased to accept patronage of Transplant Australia, and last September, Marlena and I have registered on the web as organ donors. It is regrettable that whilst Australia has one of the highest medical success rates in the world for transplants, we have also one of the lowest donor rates.
Currently some 3,500 Australians are waiting for a life-saving organ or tissue transplant. All of us have a role to play in making transplants available to those who need them and there is little reason why a country such as Australia should not be among the foremost in being able to ensure that when a transplant is needed, it can be provided quickly and efficiently.

Transplant Australia is outstanding in disseminating this message and in alerting us all to the wide range of life threatening and debilitating illnesses - heart, kidney and liver diseases, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, blindness and leukaemia - that transplants can overcome.

I commend Chief Executive Officer, Mark Cocks, and members of the Transplant Australia team for their untiring work and for their contribution to the World Games.

As for our competitors who will represent Australia at the Games this month, you are inspirational human beings. I understand that along with the rest of the Australian team, our ACT representatives will be competing across a range of 14 sports that include cycling, swimming, track and field, ten pin bowling, golf and tennis.

By seeking excellence and by displaying great sportsmanship, Rob, Lisa, Nick and Damian are outstanding ambassadors for Australia, and in particular for the Australian Transplant program.

Marlena and I wish them and the entire Australian team every success in Canada, and we look forward to hearing your results. The competitions are bound to give tremendous satisfaction and joy, and we are sure you will return home with the most wonderful memories.

Well done. Good luck and God speed.

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