

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
**DINNER TO FAREWELL THE BOARD OF THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL
TRUST**
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
24 JUNE 2008

May I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today; their wisdom, enduring history and culture.

Marlena and I are pleased to welcome you to Government House. And I am delighted to be hosting this gathering to honour the ideals and work of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and your contribution as Members of the Board.

Since the Trust was established in 1965, more than 3100 Australians have been awarded Churchill Fellowships to pursue an extraordinarily wide range of projects and initiatives.

During my own term as Governor General and Patron-in Chief, almost 500 fellowships have been awarded, covering many topics crucial to the future of our society.

There is almost no area of Australian life in which Churchill Fellows have not made a significant contribution, including healthcare, the environment, science, education, the arts, law and order and protection of the vulnerable.

Topics that come to mind from my term include:

- . meeting acute housing needs and homelessness;
- . countering outlaw motorcycle gangs;
- . rehabilitating our younger veterans;
- . restoring coastal wetlands;
- . establishing refugee employment programs;
- . preventing the sexual exploitation of children;
- . improving dementia care; and
- . testing an innovative spinal cord injury treatment.

Despite the diversity of their projects there is one link common to all our Churchill Fellows - a strong commitment to supporting the community in some way.

In short, the Fellows want to make a difference.

The Fellowships themselves are generally awarded on the basis of their potential to deliver positive outcomes to the community.

As Patron-in-Chief of the Trust, I have had the pleasure of hosting functions every year since 2004 for Churchill Fellowship awardees from the ACT.

I have seen at first hand how highly talented, caring and committed the Fellows are. People such as:

. Professor John Yeo, a 1966 Fellow from New South Wales, who went on to become one of our leading spinal cord specialists;

. Rex Hobcroft, a 1967 Tasmanian Fellow who became founding chairman of the Australian International Conservatorium of Music and one of our most distinguished music educators; and

. Geoff Wilkinson, whose 1985 Victorian fellowship resulted in the introduction of the Crime Stoppers program.

The achievements and contributions that Churchill Fellows have made, and are continuing to make, also serve as constant reminders of the value of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

It is now 43 years since Sir Winston Churchill died.

He was a man of extraordinary independence and great courage - a true statesman and without doubt one of the most influential people of the past century.

Sir Winston was also guided by a deep inner conviction and personal values that helped him succeed against great odds.

When he became Britain's Prime Minister and Minister for Defence in the dark days of May 1940, Hitler's war machine had overrun most of Western Europe and France was about to fall.

From a seemingly hopeless position, Churchill rallied and inspired the British people to resist until the Commonwealth Empire countries and American forces achieved final victory five and a half years later.

Today, as in the past, it is Churchill's words as much as his deeds that continue to inspire succeeding generations.

Almost exactly 100 years ago, Churchill uttered these words in Dundee in Scotland:

'What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?'

I can think of no words which better describe the work of the Trust itself and the ideals and aspirations of those who have been awarded Fellowships.

The continuing success of the Fellowship program would not have been possible without the commitment and hard work of the Trust's Board of Directors and the committees that give their time voluntarily to select the successful applicants, as well as the corporate and individual donors who support the Trust financially.

I congratulate you all for your magnificent work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

After five very stimulating, wide-ranging and often demanding years as Governor-General of this great nation, I will be leaving this office with a deep and abiding conviction that Australia is well-placed to face the challenges of the future.

Much of my confidence is based on the character of the Australian citizen and my long-held belief that

he is innovative, practical and prepared to 'have a go'.

As proud Australians, it is up to us to grasp and shape our nation's future.

I have no doubt future Churchill Fellows will continue to play an important role in mapping that future for the betterment of the generations to come.

As our term in office draws to a close, Marlena and I wish the Trust continuing success in making such a wonderful contribution to the well-being of our nation.

Thank you.