

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**LAUNCH OF 'FROM SLATE TO CYBER-SPACE': HALE SCHOOL - 150 YEARS**  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, PERTH  
28 JUNE 2008

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

We might think that 'From Slate To Cyber Space' is a detailed history of the Hale School from its origins in the late 1850s to the present day.

In fact, it is a broad synthesis of the history of both Western Australia and Australia, juxtaposed with the story of the school's development and the remarkable contribution of Haleians in the great local, national and international events of the past 150 years.

In engaging with this work, we note six Premiers of Western Australia once attended this school, thirteen Rhodes Scholars, and as Bill has recorded: 'Hale School has produced more than its share of outstanding scholars and sportsmen over the past 150 years - test cricketers, all Australian footballers, swathes of highly successful doctors, lawyers, businessmen, politicians and military men.'

Indeed, Hale School's most decorated soldier, Alf Bessell-Browne served with distinction in the Boer War, landed at Anzac Cove in 1915 and then fought on the Western front, ending the war as the Brigadier-General Commander of the 5th Division Artillery. Captain Ray Phillips MC and Bar, DFC, shot down 15 enemy fighters with a string of probables, one of the highest tallies in the fledgling Australian Flying Corps.

They are representative of an extraordinary military contribution by graduates of Hale School in all major conflicts since then, as shown in the Hale School Memorial Grove on these grounds, which commemorates 123 scholars who lost their lives fighting for this country.

I noted with pleasure that LTCOL Ralph Honner, the Commanding Officer of the gallant 39th Militia Battalion, which so bravely took the brunt of the Japanese assaults along the Kokoda Track was a former English teacher and boarding house master at the school.

Russell Lloyd OBE, MC, a good friend of mine was another distinguished soldier of more recent times. And Sir Colin Hannah and Sir Valston Hancock were distinguished air marshals of the RAAF; the former also Governor of Queensland.

In the artistic field, I read with interest that Robert Drewe's formative years were spent here with reflections on that period in his later writing. Then there was the composer and musician Tristan Venables and many more luminaries.

Historically, Bill has produced a masterly evocation of the every earliest years of the Swan River colony, and demonstrates with meticulous care, how the colonial influences sometimes tempered the development of the School; the lack of knowledge among settlers on how to work the land on which the indigenous inhabitants had thrived for many thousands of years, the impact of the acute shortage of labour leading to the mixed blessing of convict labour.

The School's Founder, Dr Mathew Blagden Hale, had earlier written a monograph on the convict issue, arguing well ahead of his time for a reforming approach, rather than making WA a penal settlement.

Alas, this was not to be, with some very hardened and desperate souls arriving on the Swan River in future years.

On Bishop Hale's own vessel 'The Nile' he reported in 1857 that 'there were 270 men, many of them desperate characters and bent on mischief, turned loose on a low lighted prison between the decks of the Nile, without any officer on the ship having any previous experience with these types of desperate men. It was not until the warders had learned by dearly bought experience that the prisoners were brought under control.'

In capturing the sometimes harsh life of the colony and the many social, economic and political issues pressing on the colonists, Bill has set the school's early development in clear context, presenting an era which is increasingly distant for many in these fast-paced times, and would perhaps be slipping even further away but for the work of scholars and historians such as Bill Edgar.

Despite the uncertain start of the School, with closure occurring briefly at one point, we read of Canon Burton's insight in chronicling the School's years to 1900 that 'Bishop Hale must be given the credit of being something more than the founder of...Hale School. He is the founder of secondary education in this State; he had urged parents to value wisdom and knowledge above wealth, and slowly the lesson had been learned.'

And the boys were pretty tough too. 'Lawrence Eliot, aged just 11 and son of the Government Officer in Bunbury, came to school by pony, swimming the Murray River, camping out at night on his own and scared of the natives, particularly in the dense bush south of the Murray...'

Bishop Hale was not alone in being influenced by the approach of Dr Arnold, the famous master at Rugby School in England who saw the necessity of his own institution being 'a school of Christian gentlemen'.

One of the early strengths of Hale School was on the cricket field, where the boys defeated various colonial teams in a sport that was seen as one of the most civilising and gentlemanly of games.

Through the many events chronicled from the subsequent century and more, and the recollections of the scholars, we see the same enterprising, purposeful, spirited - and sometimes cheeky - approach to life among the boys whose lives were powerfully influenced by their School.

An ethos of fair play, excellence, patriotism, compassion, thoughtfulness and respect for others was reinforced and developed by the excellent staff of the School.

These are qualities a civilised society seeks in its citizens, so we should not be surprised at the exceptional role of Hale's scholars in Australia's civic, political, military, commercial and social life. From the Forrest brothers, the Lee-Steeres, Ross McLarty, Maurice Brearley to Bishop Riley, Sir Charles and Richard Court, Colin Hannah and Andrew Forrest, the list of distinguished former scholars goes on, led and taught by outstanding Headmasters of the likes of Haymes, Faulkner, Buntine, Wilson, Tregonning, Inverarity and Stuart Meade.

In 2008, Hale School continues under the motto 'DUTY', with an enviable reputation for academic excellence, strong pastoral care and varied co-curricular opportunities.

I found it of interest to note that the infantry battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment, several of which I have served in through peace and war; live train and fight to the proud motto 'DUTY FIRST'.

I would suggest that the future of this State and our nation will be assured if we continue to have great academic institutions such as Hale, with teachers who: open students' minds to new possibilities; challenge students to ask questions about the world and the environment in which we

live; help students think carefully about their answers to those questions; and encourage students to learn of things not always found in books.

We should all be working towards a society in which boys (and girls) have abundant opportunities to understand and appreciate: their place in history; the significance of the culture and ideas which they have inherited from families and those who love them; a strong sense of self worth; the distinction between good and bad, the creative and the mediocre; valuing one's family and friends; having respect for the dignity and worth of every human being; and the integrity of noble thoughts and actions.

More broadly, I know this book will be widely read and greatly enjoyed by all with an interest in the remarkable story of a School much loved by its student body, as well as by scholars, historians and all with an interest in the contribution of the Hale School to the development of Western Australia and indeed the nation.

At 100,000 words or so, it has clearly been a labour of love by Bill Edgar, further demonstrated in the complex and meticulous research he has undertaken.

It is also superbly presented.

It now gives me great pleasure to formally launch 'From Slate to Cyberspace' and wish it and its author deserved success.

Thank you.