

Speech

Address By

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

On the occasion of

Official opening, St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital

Wickham Terrace, Brisbane
7 May 2010

Moderator, Uniting Church Queensland
Reverend Bruce Johnson

Chair of UnitingCare
Ms Heather Watson

CEO, UnitingCare Health
Ms Anne Cross

General Manager St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital
Mr Ian England

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Friends

With such fond memories of the Hospital's 50th birthday celebrations in March 2008, I am really thrilled to join you here again for another special occasion in the life of St Andrew's.

These days, a hospital redevelopment of this magnitude and magnificence, justly earns the title of world-class health facility.

But facility seems to be a very poor noun for what St Andrew's is, was, and continues to solidly stand for.

It is, rather, an institution: one that is dear and important to countless many, my family included. I was recently looking at a copy of the January 1961 edition of the St Andrews Messenger.

Its headline was: "Target - £28,000: Appeal Day 25 February, A Challenge To Us All".

I think it was my first ever fundraising effort:

- walking the hills of Auchenflower,
- not far from my grandmother's house and the little Presbyterian Church where I was christened,
- door knocking for Brisbane's fine new war memorial hospital.

It was an extraordinarily successful appeal for funds from Queenslanders in the South-East and into the West.

In fact, what was unique about St Andrew's was the Church's ability to garner widespread community support from all over Queensland from as early as 1947.

It's no wonder that Mrs Jeanie Rennie, a foundation committee member of the Women's Auxiliary, referred to it as "the Hospital built on pikelets"!

I remember well when the Hospital opened in 1958:

- Governor Sir Henry Abel-Smith charged with the honour;
- The significance of the name, the flag, and the tartan ;
- The occasions august with piped processions – kilts and sporran swaying in unison;
- And its origins in faith, compassion and service, which you have preserved at the heart of your undertaking.

Page two of the Messenger was Dr John Sutherland's address to the first graduation of St Andrew's trainee nurses.

It was headed, "What it means to be a Nurse".

He began with the two fundamental principles in nursing – humanity and efficiency – indivisible from one another, much like art and the science of medicine in a good doctor.

I smiled at how that might go down today.

And I made a mental note to talk to my elder sister Diane about it, as I calculated that she must surely have been in the audience.

Indeed, as my eyes travelled up the page, there she was:

- one of eight new nurses,
- all in starched veils and smart tartan capes,
- grasping candles and certificates in white-gloved hands,
- a traditional Florence Nightingale ceremony.

We all felt so proud of Diane that day; and beyond, as she matured through the Hospital's ranks to head theatre sister.

She loved her work here, and still speaks so affectionately and highly of her sister nurses and the enduring camaraderie among them.

As her regular covert visitors down the side driveway of the Hospital, and as patients from time to time over the years, that was our family's experience too.

There was always a permeating warmth and generosity that accompanied the expert nursing and medical care.

And in turn, we felt an enormous gratitude and respect for the marvellous matrons and doctors of those early years.

In her personal recollections published in the Hospital's 50 year history, Miss Annat – former Nursing Superintendent, Matron and CEO – spoke of her first impressions of friendliness and unswerving loyalty that never left her throughout her 27 years at St Andrew's.

She mentioned how long-time Chairman, Dr Alex Mayes, would visit the Hospital every day to see patients, sick staff and attend the CEO's office.

He would say to Miss Annat, "I see a 350 bed hospital as our goal, covering all major specialties, with excellent diagnostic facilities and operating theatres – that, my dear Matron, is my vision for St Andrew's".

And that, my friends, is the stamp of this place.

What makes St Andrew's a world-class health facility are:

- visionary leadership,
- the outstanding health professionals who provide exemplary care,

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- the sophisticated resources and technologies,
- the commercial acumen of the Board and administrators,
- the ongoing commitment to research and education.

But what makes St Andrew's a cherished institution, and an essential part of the fabric of this community and nation, is the dedication of its people to the life and purpose of this Hospital.

It was only a couple of weeks ago that I stood on the Gallipoli Peninsula representing Australia at this year's Anzac Day commemoration ceremonies.

In my Dawn address I said that love reminds us of why we must never let go of Anzac Day.

Love of nation, of service, and of family.

These are the foundations of St Andrew's too, and the reasons we stand here today honouring a history and inaugurating a future.

...For the increase of righteousness:

For the spread of the spirit of love:

For the healing of the Sick...

In the unity of faith:

In the communion of saints

In love and goodwill to all...

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my greatest privilege to declare open the new St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital.

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