Speech

Address By

His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)

On the occasion of

Reception to mark 100 years of the Australian Red Cross

Singleton Showgrounds
17 August 2014

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and most importantly, members of the Australian Red Cross family.

I am very pleased—as Governor-General and as patron of Australian Red Cross—to be here in Singleton today to mark 100 years of Red Cross in Australia.

Though most of us realise our national branch of the Red Cross was born out of the trials and tribulations of the Great War, that it happened just nine days after war was declared is truly remarkable.

It is a testament to the desire of ordinary Australians to do their part to contribute to the war effort—to support the soldiers, to raise money, to bring people together.

It also shows how the fundamental humanitarian principals of the Red Cross—people helping people—have always been able to attract and inspire people to action.

By the end of the war four years later, Red Cross volunteers numbered in their hundreds of thousands, and the Australian Red Cross would go on to become the largest charitable organisation in the nation.

Thus began a compassionate movement of duty, devotion and selflessness so strong that one hundred years later the Australian Red Cross is still a beacon of hope, a source of comfort and trusted base of support and assistance to people right across our nation.

Earlier this week I launched Professor Melanie Oppenheimer’s book called ‘The Power of Humanity—100 years of Australian Red Cross’.

I can think of no better way to mark the centenary of the Australian Red Cross than by releasing a book that pays tribute to you—the countless women and men who for one hundred years have devoted themselves to helping others.

It is an uplifting and inspiring account of generations of Australians, people from all walks of life, who generously devoted themselves to Red Cross and its humanitarian values.

The book also shows how over the past century the Australian Red Cross has modernised and adapted, embraced change and technology.

Yet in doing so, has stayed true and maintained those fundamental values that were at the heart of the organisation a century ago—selflessness, compassion, care, and service to our nation.

I have great personal admiration for the women and men of the Australian Red Cross.

I have witnessed your care and devotion in both war and peace. Here at home—after Cyclone Tracey and Cyclone Larry—and overseas—in Vietnam and East Timor—I worked alongside the Australian Red Cross.
I know the difference you make.

I have seen how much faith Australians have in your organisation.

Lynne and I are so pleased to be here today to thank you all in person for what you do—your service, your care and your dedication.

We look forward to meeting you.

Source URL: https://www.gg.gov.au/speech/reception-mark-100-years-australian-red-cross