

**OPENING OF THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL FARRALL CENTRE
BY
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GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA & MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD,
FRIDAY - 25TH FEBRUARY 2011**

For Frances and me it is a great honour and privilege to have been invited here this evening to take part in the Opening Ceremony for this wonderful Farrall Centre. We are particularly grateful to John Green and the Board of the Friends' School for asking us both to open the building jointly on behalf of the Friends' School Community. That is the Quaker way and that is the way Frances and I carry out the non-constitutional duties of the Office of Governor. We do it together. However, all the nuances involved in working this way were not fully appreciated by one of our grandchildren who was heard to tell his class just after I had been appointed that Grandma doesn't live with Grandpa Peter any more because she has gone to Govhouse!

Neither Frances nor I attended Friends as students but most of our children did and we feel a very close affinity with the School because Frances joined the staff of the Junior School in 1979. She became Co Head then Head of the Junior School in 1989 and remained there until her retirement at the end of 2004. My connection with the School commenced in May 1989 when I was appointed the Presiding Member of the Executive Committee of the Board. That was just a few months after Lyndsay and Stephanie Farrall took up the position of Co-Principals of Friends.

At that time the School was in some difficulty. Enrolments had dropped to just over 700 across all three campuses and the building stock

was in a grave state of disrepair. Indeed, Hobartville was in such a bad state that the Fire Brigade had declared it unsafe and was on the point of issuing a notice condemning it for use as a school.

But the arrival of the Farralls turned all this around. They generated a new era - one of optimism, hope and enthusiasm. New financial programmes were put in place, the school community increased in size and a tremendous fund raising programme, under the banner "Friends for the Future", got underway. Hobartville was restored and saved and the whole building stock of the school was steadily upgraded and expanded; a programme that John Green and subsequent Boards have successfully continued.

But the Farralls brought a lot more to the Friends' School than increased enrolments and fund raising programmes. They drew the students, the old scholars, the teachers, the parents, and grandparents, and the Board into a learning community that worked together. That's right isn't it Frances?

Yes it is. From the moment they arrived at the school it was clear that the Farralls had a gift for nurturing a spirit of community. They drew the whole school into a consultative or strategic planning process. Everyone was included and everyone was made to feel valued, generating a community spirit and warmth that was irresistible. This generosity of spirit provided the social glue that welded the school community together.

It was a time when education generally was suffering from what Stephanie's father and former Friends' School Principal, William Oats, called "an uncertainty of purpose" and it was the parents, who through the consultative processes, asked that the spiritual purpose of the school be made more evident. The Purpose and Concerns statement grew out of this request. It was, and still is, a living organic document, the spirit of which is nurtured daily in every interaction until it has simply become a way of life.

We know that you are familiar with the Purpose and Concerns Statement but on this special occasion it is appropriate that we spell it out and reflect on its content because its importance cannot be over estimated.

"The Friends' School is a co-educational Quaker school based on fundamental values such as the intrinsic worth of each person, the recognition of 'that of God' in everyone, the desirability of simplicity and the need to establish peace and justice.

As a learning community, we are concerned for the academic, cultural, physical, social and spiritual development of each person in our care. We seek to help our students develop into men and women who will think clearly, act with integrity, make decisions for themselves, be sensitive to the needs of others and the environment, be strong in service and hold a global perspective.

We believe that these aims can best be achieved with the active support of all members of our School community."

A lot more than national testing and league tables in that statement isn't there?

Yes there is. Having a common understanding of the purpose of education based on shared values that are articulated and practiced by all members of the school community and that are directed to the well being of the learner is an invaluable source of strength and foundational reference. It is the spiritual capital that underpins everything else. Add to that spiritual capital, high intellectual capital, high social capital and high economic capital and you have the recipe for an outstanding school.

My belief and experience is that if the spiritual and creative conditions are right, and if the intellect is enlivened, and people are inspired to grow in synergy with the people around them they will become the best they can be across all domains. This is learning that Peter and I carried away with us from our years at Friends' and learning that we have adopted in our community role within the Office of Governor.

It is highly appropriate that this beautiful gathering space be known as the Farrall Centre for many reasons, two of which are particularly apposite:

1. It is a space that supports the nurturing of the spirit of community in many diverse ways, by using it for events such as concerts, art exhibitions, grandparents' day, and gatherings for reflection and so on. Designed by creative old scholars, contributed to by the school community and the Federal Government; overseen by a dedicated and effective

development office, and constructed by talented builders, it connects with something fundamental to the sense of identity and purpose of the school – as do Lyndsay and Stephanie.

2. This building has not been designed to suit multi-purposes – usually suiting none of those purposes particularly well – but principally as a centre for the creative arts. As Co Principals, both Stephanie, a musician, and Lyndsay, were clear about recognizing the value of, and practical in their support for, the arts in education. This is something else William Oats, who was also a musician, certainly would have approved of, for he said, “The educational process is as much concerned with the emotions as with the intellect [and] with creativity as much as with rational thought. Schools [he said] therefore should give far more attention to the creative arts which are what some might call the ‘fringe-dwellers in our schools.”¹ The spirit is nurtured by imagination and sensitivity to beauty and in the new creative economy the sustainable competitive advantage will be in building a culture that values people as individuals and enables creativity to excel.

Frances and I are privileged to have worked with, and been friends with Stephanie and Lyndsay – still are – so far as we know! – and we feel very proud to stand here and open this building on behalf of the Friends’ community and see it named the Farrall Centre.

¹ Oats (1990) ISBN 9595600 2 5. at 21.