

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY  
MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING OF RED CROSS, HOBART,  
TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2013**

It is always a pleasure to be with you for the Red Cross Annual General Meeting and I look forward to talking to some of you at Government House later this afternoon.

As the Red Cross knows only too well, this year has been marked by devastating bushfires that brought so much pain to so many. Everyone turned to the Red Cross and the Red Cross responded in its customary efficient and sympathetic way. People turn to, and trust Red Cross in times of dire need because it is an organization whose principles, values and beliefs translate into effective action especially for the vulnerable. Effective action especially for the vulnerable was exactly what Red Cross in Tasmania provided last January.

At the invitation of the Tasmanian Government, Red Cross launched the Tasmanian Bushfires 2013 Appeal to assist individuals, families and communities directly affected by the bush fires. The Appeal raised close to \$9 million from across Australia and internationally. Over 150 Red Cross staff, members and volunteers provided the much needed emergency response, outreach, recovery, support and assistance to more than 3,000 people, efficiently, rapidly and with empathy. A deeply moving and effective response to a public emergency and human tragedy. I congratulate and offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who were involved in that magnificent effort and to all those who continue to assist

the members of that vulnerable community whose lives were defined by the events of January 2013.

On the national front I am looking forward to celebrating the centenary of Australian Red Cross with you next year. I think we have penciled in a garden party at government House and I hope to see you all there. As you all know Red Cross Australia was formed at Government House in Melbourne in August 1914 exactly nine days after WW1 broke out. As you would also know Red Cross began internationally 150 years ago as a proposal for a national society to attend to wounded soldiers. It evolved into the world largest humanitarian organization with more than 180 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and millions of volunteers world wide. In November this year Australia has the honour of hosting the Statutory Meetings of the Red Cross Red and Crescent Societies which will attract over one thousand representatives. From little things big things do indeed grow!

For more than one hundred years Red Cross has played a significant role not only in assisting vulnerable people and communities and supporting those devastated by conflict and humanitarian emergencies, but also - importantly for the future of humanity - by actively raising awareness of international law as a viable alternative to warfare and most recently working towards the entry into a legally binding agreement to ban nuclear weapons. In the words of Andrew Carnegie, founder of the Peace Palace in the Hague, “nothing that mankind has accomplished to this date equals the replacement of war by court rulings based on international law that slowly but surely will become the cornerstone ....of that great edifice; civilisation.”

Although the path towards civilisation is long and tedious, progress is being made and much of that progress has been achieved by the work of Red Cross. You have come a long way since 1914. There is much to celebrate. I urge you to keep up the good work on the home front, nationally and internationally. And I will see you all tonight for a celebratory drink!