

**REMARKS AT THE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE BY MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD, HOBART,  
SATURDAY 10 DECEMBER 2011**

Thank you Dr Burke for asking me along to join you for morning tea at this annual meeting. Because of my commitment to the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and the Beethoven concert in Launceston I was unable to be present for the reception at Government House last evening but my husband said that it was, and I quote him, "a good one." I hope he is right about that. He also told me that he passed on my congratulations to Mr Greg Vicary on his election to the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. That is a very high honour for Mr Vicary and also for Australian Red Cross. I understand that as well, congratulations go to our new national president Michael Legge. That's the first time a Tasmanian has been elected to that office. Well done.

However, this morning gives me the opportunity to thank all those who work as volunteers for Australian Red Cross, whether here in Tasmania, across mainland Australia and of course all over the world. Without its volunteers Australian Red Cross would not be able to survive. There are so many things to be done.

Here in Tasmania Red Cross needs volunteers in many different areas: volunteers are needed to build relationships with residents of aged care homes by making regular visits and thus improving the quality of the residents' life; the Red Cross needs volunteers who will involve themselves in the social and recreational activities of

persons living with mental illness; Red Cross always needs volunteers to help deliver meals to frail, aged and disabled people in their own homes, assisting them to maintain their independence.

And as I have said, Red Cross also needs volunteers who are able and willing to work overseas. Australian Red Cross is proud to be a core partner in Australian Volunteers for International Development, a new program from the Australian Government's overseas aid agency AusAID. Volunteers who serve overseas join a network of over 13 million volunteers around the world, helping to strengthen local development efforts and build healthy, functional and self-reliant communities. And Red Cross always needs volunteers to give blood and to raise funds to support its valuable work.

Last Monday was International Volunteer Day, a day established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985 to celebrate the work done by volunteers. There are many volunteers at this meeting. The work that each of you do is valuable and is valued by those whom you serve. You will all be aware of the recently published "National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2011".<sup>i</sup> Even so, there are some statistics worth mentioning because they do you proud. No less than 38% of Australia's adult population volunteer in some capacity, with the number of volunteers in this country doubling in the last fifteen years. And the survey found that the volunteering experience has been satisfying for nine out of ten respondents - to me, that says it all about your commitment, and the great work you do in helping those in need.

As the Patron of Australian Red Cross Tasmania I am here to say to each of you and all the others volunteers who work for Red Cross: thank you for your service. Keep it up and I encourage you to get your friends and acquaintances to join with you in volunteering.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02\\_article/article\\_view.asp?article\\_id=4350&nav\\_cat\\_id=-1&nav\\_top\\_id=-1](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?article_id=4350&nav_cat_id=-1&nav_top_id=-1), accessed 6 December 2011.