

**MORNING TEA FOR THE FRIENDS OF ST GILES
REMARKS BY MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 13 JUNE 2014**

Good morning everyone and welcome to Government House. This is an auspicious occasion because it is the first time that you have come here since I accepted your kind invitation to become your Patron in July 2013.

Well, that's virtually a year ago and is I think a measure of just how fast time goes by. Or to put that another way, that we all find ways of keeping pretty busy! I can assure you of that with respect to the Office of the Governor, because we have something like 600 Vice-Regal events annually, either here or somewhere in Tasmania.

Many of you will know that His Excellency has recently undergone surgery and I'm very pleased to say that he's recovering well. And he would most certainly have liked to have been here.

Speaking of being busy, I've no doubt at all the people of St Giles, with some 250 staff supporting six thousand clients, lead very full, demanding and yet rewarding lives.

It has impressed me greatly to know that your focus on early childhood intervention through allied health therapies is second to none in Tasmania, enabling children with severe disabilities to live within the family home, attend school and so become genuinely well equipped to move into the adult world.

It is a fact of which St Giles can be proud that nowhere else in Australia can families of children with disabilities attend a single location, outreach clinic and work with a multi-discipline therapy team, to develop a plan that has the child and family at its heart and is developed in collaboration, not in isolation. The guiding principle—and what a sensible one—is that the family are the experts.

Among your services are: centre-based therapy; communication access services; in-home and centre-based respite; statewide outreach therapy clinics; adult group homes; Tasmania's only mobile, statewide, all-ages wheelchair support team; high quality, evidence based, physiotherapy, occupational and speech therapy; and a diverse range of disability support equipment.

And so with this impressive diversity and commitment in mind I would like to use this gathering this morning to focus on two specific activities of The Friends of St Giles.

The first is your ongoing efforts to raise funds for Stage Two of the Gant Street therapy playspace at Lenah Valley. Stage One enabled the site to be cleared and landscaped with allied drainage work to set up the playground and install basic equipment—the sandpit and trampoline, at a cost of nearly eighty thousand dollars funded by donations and with the support of Westpac Bank.

Stage Two will enable the purchase and installation of the more expensive, adaptive playground equipment required for children with disability—this will require a further eighty thousand dollars. It's a significant sum and this is where donations play such a key role. Every dollar that comes in is a step towards completing Stage Two of the Gant Street therapy playspace; a step towards enriching the life of a Tasmanian child with a significant disability.

Ladies and gentlemen at this stage it seems appropriate that I take a moment to thank longtime St Giles supporters, including: members of The Vos Family Foundation; Brian and Wendy Faulkner; Hugh Denny; members of The Foster Family; and Commander Stacey Porter and crew of the Royal Australian Navy, Anglesea Barracks.

The second activity of The Friends of St Giles that I'd like to mention is also a fundraiser, and what an enjoyable one it promises to be. It is called "Walk With Me".

It will be held from 10am on Saturday the 13th September. Participants will gather on the Lawns in front of Parliament House, then move along Castray Esplanade and return to Parliament Lawns, accompanied by members of the Royal Australian Navy Band.

Sounds like a short stroll? Well, not really. While it may be only a short walk for some, it's going to be a real challenge for others. "Walk With Me" redefines the traditional notion of an event challenge. It's not about running faster, swimming further or cycling longer distances.

"Walk With Me" is instead an opportunity to support and celebrate the diversity within our community in an inclusive and festive environment. Its purpose is an acknowledgement that one in four Australians are challenged by a disability, and so it will recognise the inspirational attitudes and achievements of this one quarter of our population.

I'm told that "Walk With Me" is the only National event connecting people of all abilities.

Now that will be something to be part of and to celebrate—starting with a gourmet barbecue and entertainment after the Walk. I urge you to spread the word about this novel and inclusive event that will add colour to our world famous Salamanca Market. There's every reason to get down there that morning and help The Friends of St Giles in their fantastic work.

And on that note I will conclude by saying again that I feel privileged to be your Patron and I look forward to utilising the good name of Government House to help raise the profile of The Friends of St Giles.

Now please do enjoy the refreshments and I am sure that our staff will be delighted to show you around the State Rooms [and garden weather permitting] before you leave.

Thank you.