

**HEART FOUNDATION/MENZIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE
HONOURS SCHOLARSHIPS 2014
REMARKS BY MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2014**

Good afternoon everybody. I am here today on behalf of your Patron His Excellency the Governor of Tasmania, who as you will all know underwent surgery a little over a week ago. I am pleased to say he is recovering very well.

Some of you will also be aware that I presented these scholarships a few years ago, when my husband was again indisposed — well, my good fortune! I say so because it's a privilege to be associated with the young academics who will be honoured today. As you will shortly hear, the research each of them will be conducting into cardiovascular issues is of the highest possible standard.

Today is also an opportunity for me on behalf of your Patron to thank the sponsors and supporters of these scholarships. The benefits that accrue from your support for the Heart Foundation/ Menzies Research Institute scholarships are many. To illustrate this, consider all of the following:

For more than 50 years the Heart Foundation has been dedicated to saving lives and we have reached the point where, today, the life expectancy of Australians is about ten years longer for men and nine years longer for women. Death rates for cardiovascular disease have dropped from 6 out of every 10 to nearly 3 out of every ten.

But while the work of the Heart Foundation over the past five decades has helped to reduce the number of deaths, the blunt reality is that cardiovascular disease — including heart, stroke and blood vessel disease — remains the number one killer of Australians.

Cardiovascular disease is responsible for the deaths of over 44 thousand Australians and it is responsible for more deaths than any other disease group.

To put this into context, one person dies from cardiovascular disease on average every 12 minutes.

Cardiovascular disease is of particular concern in Tasmania. We have the highest prevalence of the disease out of all the states with 23 per cent of Tasmanians living with cardiovascular disease.

Tasmania has alarming rates of smoking – 21%;
Overweight or obesity – 65%;
Low levels of physical activity – 69%;
High blood pressure - 30%;
And high cholesterol – 39%.

The need for action is clear as cardiovascular disease is responsible for nearly one third of all deaths in Tasmania and costs the Tasmanian economy well over three hundred million dollars each year.

This is why an integral part of the Heart Foundation's work is a long-term commitment to cardiovascular research. The Heart Foundation has so far invested nearly four hundred million dollars towards this research.

In Tasmania this year alone, over two hundred thousand dollars is being provided to support five research projects; and in addition there is co-funding of forty thousand dollars for early-career researchers.

This all means that the Heart Foundation is the largest non-government funding body for cardiovascular disease research in Australia, with 25 per cent of its expenditure directed towards research.

This ongoing investment has led to important breakthroughs in the understanding of the causes of heart disease, and it has helped to develop treatment, management, and prevention strategies that support individuals and whole populations to reduce their risk of poor cardiovascular health.

Furthermore, health research is an excellent investment: every dollar spent on cardiovascular research generates an eight-dollar return to the community via improved health benefits.

The majority of this funding comes from kind individuals like you, hence your generosity is critical to ensuring that the Heart Foundation can continue its vital work.

I will conclude these remarks by noting that under the "For all Hearts" strategy for the period 2013-2017, the Heart Foundation's four goals are:

Healthy Hearts: To help all Australians to live in heart healthy environments that give them healthy options and provide information and support;

Heart Care: To help all Australians have access to quality health care and to ensure that risk factors for cardiovascular disease are well managed and well treated;

Health Equity: To address disparities in those communities that suffer disproportionately from heart disease, so that all Australians can live happier, healthier lives; and

Heart Foundation Research: To generate and translate research to provide evidence based prevention and treatment.

Congratulations again to the three recipients, Nicholas D'Elia, Rebecca Kelly, and Malanka Lankaputhra.

Thank you.