

**AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
TO OPEN THE PREMISES OF THE HEART FOUNDATION
(TASMANIAN DIVISION) AT 89 BRISBANE STREET HOBART
MONDAY 9TH JULY 2012**

It is a great pleasure for me as Patron of the Heart Foundation in Tasmania to have been asked to open these new premises for the Foundation. Of course, I was invited to be Patron of the Foundation upon my appointment as Governor of Tasmania, but I have a connection with the Foundation that goes right back to the seventies when I was a relatively new lawyer practicing at Murdoch Clarke. For 13 years from 1970–1983 I was a State Director of the Heart Foundation and of course, a great supporter of its work.

Since the establishment of the Foundation in 1959 the research and educational programmes it initiated have witnessed a steady improvement in the mortality rate from cardiovascular disease but despite this steady improvement, cardiovascular disease remains “one of the biggest causes of death in Australia and continues to generate a considerable burden on the population in terms of illness and disability.”¹

Indeed, in Tasmania heart disease remains the leading single cause of death in this State and nationally, Tasmania has the highest Cardiovascular death rate per thousand people in Australia.² So the work of the Foundation must continue; both the research and the educational

¹ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4821.0.55.001/> accessed 2nd July 2012

² Heart Foundation publication “Tasmania; Key Cardiovascular Statistics 2012.

programmes. But it's not all bad news, for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports³ the following trends:

- The overall death rate for CVD has fallen by about 80% since the 1960s and continues to fall.
- Death rates for the major types of CVD, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure, rheumatic heart disease and peripheral vascular disease, have all fallen markedly in the past 20 years.
- There appears to be some recent slowing of the decline in the coronary heart disease death rates in younger age groups; and
- CVD hospitalisation rates have declined slowly over the past decade.

These days the Heart Foundation in Tasmania is supported by a dedicated Board and Staff and, of course, many hard working and generous donors, volunteers and honouraries. Indeed, without these special people who work so hard to raise funds there would not be a Division of the Heart Foundation in Tasmania. The reality is that the Heart Foundation work is almost completely reliant on the generous support of the Tasmanian community with approximately 95 % of its funding coming from donations and bequests alone. So today is a good day for me as your Governor, to say thank you all for the tremendous support that you give to the work of the Heart Foundation. One would like to think that the end is in sight, but I regret to say that this is not the case; so as well as "thank you" I say, "Keep up the good work" for the statistics to which I have just referred show you

³ 17th March 2011: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737418510> accessed 12th June 2012

are making ground as the number of deaths from cardiovascular disease continue to fall.

In 1970 – now 40 plus years ago - when I became a director, the Chair of the Tasmanian Board was Mr Geoff Davies, a member of the Davies family who owned the Mercury newspaper before Mr Murdoch gobbled it up. Bill Davies (as he was called) was a big tall man; the managing director of the daily newspaper, and to me – a young solicitor trying to make his way - rather intimidating. Mr Davies' office on the 5th Floor of the Mercury Building was the first home for the Heart Foundation in Tasmania. When Mr Davies resigned the Foundation occupied space at the hospital for a short time and then when the Queen Alexandra maternity hospital closed down the Heart Foundation seized the opportunity to buy what used to be I think, the nurse's home next door while the rest of the building was divided up for use by a number of charities.

Now it's time to move home again for the Foundation has outgrown the Hampden Road premises into which it moved 31 years ago and has now moved into these long term leased premises in Brisbane Street. As you can see from looking around you, in here the work environment is modern, well-lit and spacious; designed to facilitate easy communications between all the staff and volunteers who will work in here. Just across the entrance lobby is an excellent meeting room or space, well equipped with audio visual aids and suitable for small meetings of all kinds. So I think that these fine new premises will suit the Tasmanian Division of the Heart Foundation for many years to come. And it is with great pleasure that I

formally declare these splendid new premises open and wish all who will work in here success in their important work.

Now opening the new premises is only party of my job this evening. I next have the very pleasant duty of conferring two Heart Foundation Tasmania Diamond Service Awards. The Diamond Service Award is given to staff, honoraries members or volunteers who have given the Foundation outstanding service and is the highest award that the Foundation makes in Tasmania. As you will hear in just a moment this evening's two awardees are very worthy recipients of a Diamond Service Award.