

**A TOAST TO HOBART LEGACY BY THE HONOURABLE PETER
UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA.**

SATURDAY 31ST AUGUST 2013

For Hobart Legacy this year is, of course, a special year for it signals the 90th anniversary of the beginnings of Legacy with the founding of the Remembrance Club by Sir John Gellibrand here in Hobart and the beginnings of Legacy Australia. There inside the front page of the 89th Annual Report of Hobart Legacy the names of all the past Presidents of Legacy are set out, beginning with “J Gellibrand 1923 - 1936”.

I am told that you celebrated your 90th anniversary this year on 24 March at St John’s Church, Ouse, and among the guests were two grandchildren of Major General Sir John Gellibrand. They flew down from NSW and I understand that they are working with Hobart Legacy’s Junior Vice-President, Peter Hodge, and TMAG, to have Sir John’s medals put on permanent display at TMAG. The 10 medals and his KCB have been on a long term loan from the family at Hobart Legacy’s Macquarie Street premises. The family apparently do not want them to go to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and I know how proud you would be if they could be kept and displayed in Hobart at TMAG. We will keep our fingers crossed that this will come to pass.

Ninetieth anniversaries are occasions to look back and reflect on the passage of years. A predecessor of mine whom many of you no doubt knew, Sir Stanley Burbury, proposed the toast to Legacy in 1974, 39 years ago. Although it was only a year after Australia withdrew from Vietnam, Sir Stanley said:

“With the inexorable passing of the years the end of Legacy as it is presently constituted has inevitably come into sight – unless – God forbid – its work be perpetuated by another major war. It is still a vigorous movement, but the ranks of the war veterans qualified for membership are inevitably thinning and it would be unrealistic to suppose that Legacy as we now know it will survive the present century.”

How right and how wrong Sir Stanley has turned out to be. For Legacy has not only survived into this century but it is as strong today as it has always been. In the 1970’s when Sir Stanley addressed you Legatees had to be returned service personnel and, as he said, it was therefore inevitable that Legacy would come to an end as so constituted. However, the demand for the support given by Legacy has not diminished over the years since Sir Stanley spoke, and today Legacy cares for 100,000 widows and 1,900 children and disabled dependents throughout Australia.¹ Legacy has responded to this demand and the challenge raised by diminishing numbers of veterans by altering the membership rules to admit any person from any walk of life who shares Legacy’s values and ideals. I say that Legacy is to be congratulated on its willingness to be flexible and its ability to continue to respond to the need for its services.

Thirteen years ago another predecessor of mine, Sir Guy Green, looked into the future of Legacy. He spoke about the changes since 1923 but described them as evolutionary rather than fundamental. Then he

¹ <http://www.legacy.com.au/>

said that “there remains a basic issue and that is, should Legacy accept that it should be wound up when the present generation of widows and children has gone or should Legacy regard itself as having a wider mission in the community and adapt itself so that it is equipped to continue its work indefinitely into the future.”

So, Sir Stanley questioned the future of Legacy when the absence of major wars would see the supply of legatees dry up and Sir Guy raised the same question, but he related it to the time when the beneficiaries in need of Legacy’s support would all eventually disappear. Now, Sir Guy postulated a possible answer to his question. He said: “An essential mission of Legacy is that it is seen as a way of remembering and honouring those who have served in defence of Australia. And of course caring for the widows and children of those who have served is a most fitting way of fulfilling that mission. But we ought to bear in mind that those whom Legacy is remembering and honouring regarded themselves as serving the whole country. It thus could be seen as equally fitting that Legacy’s field of service should be correspondingly enlarged so as to embrace other areas of need in our community as well.”

Well, you have satisfactorily answered the question that Sir Stanley raised: What will Legacy do when there are not enough returned servicemen and women to provide the Legatees? And I am equally confident that when the time comes - or rather I fear I should unfortunately say that if the time comes - when there are no longer any widows and children of service personnel to care for, the inspiring spirit of Legacy will not die out but will move into the general community to

help all those who are in need of that unique one on one personal service that Legacy does so well.

I am proud to propose this toast to Hobart Legacy