

**RREMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA AS HE TURNED THE FIRST SOD  
AT THE SITE OF A NEW VETINERARY HOSPITAL AT 221 - 227  
ELIZABETH STREET HOBART, THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2012.**

Now I think that should confess straight up that ordinarily I don't open new business premises that are private commercial operations. The list of requests to do that would no doubt be very long if it were thought that the Governor was prepared to give vice-regal support to individual private commercial businesses. So why am I here today? To tell the absolute truth I am here today because of Mr Peter Gouldthorpe! He is the artist & illustrator who painted all the animals on the outside wall of the existing veterinary premises at 273 Elizabeth Street all queued up to get in to consult the vet. Now in my former life I used to live at New Town and frequently walked past 273 Elizabeth Street on the way to or from town and I always had to resist the temptation to bend down and pat each of the animals patiently waiting to get into the hospital. I just thought they were delightful and I am not surprised to read on Peter Gouldthorpe's website that one day a little old lady told him - old ladies are always little aren't they - that his artwork on the wall had got "strangers talking to each other." So I thought that if the Governor turned the sod for the building of a new hospital he might just encourage Mr Gouldthorpe to "move" the queue of animals from 273 Elizabeth Street to the new address just a little way down the road. It is a piece of artwork that should not be lost in the move.

I am sure you will all agree with me when I say that most human beings can, and many do form special bonds with their animal or animals. “A pet owner knows the enormous joy and comfort that an animal can provide, especially in troubled times.” Indeed, some people bereaved of animals that they have come to cherish are so severely affected that they need grief counseling. An article in *Science Daily* magazine reported that, “most pets are considered important members of the family and irreplaceable companions. A growing body of research now documents the value of the human-animal bond in child development, elderly care, mental illness, physical impairment, dementia, abuse and trauma recovery, and the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth and adults.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the Canadian Abilities Foundation:

“One study by psychologist Aline Kidd found pet owners to be more responsible and dependable and less egotistical and self-centred than people who do not have pets. Pet owners have higher nurturance scores and are more self-sufficient, independent, optimistic, poised and productive. And are these not the very traits and qualities that the disability community is trying to promote and instill in its individual members as they cut through mainstream society? The question remains as to

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<sup>1</sup> Science Daily, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/11/091130121441.htm> accessed 3rd July 2012.

whether people with these characteristics are more likely to have a pet -- or whether a pet itself can foster these traits in almost anyone. This is just one of the many theories that are keeping countless researchers and the like busy. Animals can, however, take credit for their incredible contribution to human well-being.”<sup>2</sup>

It follows that the work done by veterinarians and the services they provide in modern animal hospitals like this one will be, are very valuable and important to humans as well of course, to the animals themselves. Indeed the Mission statement of the North Hobart Veterinary Hospital embraces this fact when it states:

*“North Hobart Veterinary Hospital enhances the special bond that exists between pets and their owners by offering the highest standard of animal health care in an understanding and friendly environment.”*

The North Hobart Veterinary Hospital was established approximately 50 years ago in premises at Tasma Street and is currently staffed by more than 30 people including 8 veterinarians. In 1973 the practice opened a branch on the Eastern Shore which of course became very busy after the collapse of the Tasman Bridge. It has been at 273 Elizabeth Street for some 30 years now but has outgrown those premises and is in need of a new home. This new

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.abilities.ca/family\\_life/1995/09/01/the\\_human\\_animal\\_bond/](http://www.abilities.ca/family_life/1995/09/01/the_human_animal_bond/) accessed 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

home, to be built by VOS Constructions, will comprise 500 square metres of space providing the practice with additional consulting rooms and increased surgery capacity. This successful practice that has already won several Hobart City Council Customer Service Awards will no doubt flourish in its new building which will be fitted out with modern equipment including diagnostic imaging, in-house pathology and a state of the art operating theatre.

So it gives me much pleasure to mark the start of work by turning the first sod and as I do so I wish the owners, the staff and the clients well in the new building.