

REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA TO OPEN THE 50TH BIENNIAL
CONVENTION OF THE YMCA, HOBART,
FRIDAY 23RD NOVEMBER 2012.

As the Governor of Tasmania it is a pleasure and a privilege for me to be here this morning to welcome you all to Hobart and to Tasmania for the 50th YMCA biennial convention. We have delegates and their partners from all parts of Australia and from overseas as well - although I suppose that if you don't live in Tasmania technically you must be an overseas visitor! Included in the impressive delegate list are many who have served the Y with great distinction for a long time. There are far too many people at this convention who fit into that category to mention them all individually, but I know you would want me to single out for a special welcome the Reverend Johan Vilhelm Eltvik the Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCA's, and his wife Ingunn, and Kohei Yamada the General Secretary of the Asia & Pacific Alliance of YMCA's, and his wife Marlene. As well as the General Secretary and his wife we have here members of the Board of Directors of the Asia & Pacific Alliance of YMCA's. To add to that list are the Australian and New Zealand Presidents, Alan Morton and Tony Jones and many more besides. You are all warmly welcomed and I hope that those who have not been to Tasmania before will be able to find a little time to look around our island State for it is always particularly beautiful at this time of the year.

Well, happy birthday YMCA Australia. This is your 50th biennial convention but not your 100th year since founding because of

course, the Young Mens' Christian Association has been in Australia for 160 years, and remains today a most impressive association. First of all it is huge. It is a global not-for-profit organisation that now operates in 119 countries reaching 58 million people. It is not only huge, but it has prospered ever since it was founded in England in 1844 and it continues to prosper right across the world. Here in Australia the past year has seen a 15% growth in revenue and there are not many not-for-profit organisations that can lay claim to successful continuity of that order over such a long period.

The Y might be called the quiet achiever. It doesn't go in for flashy campaigns or celebratory status. Its management is not dogged with controversy or public discord. The Y just quietly gets on with the job it has set out to do, and it seems to me that at the heart of its longevity and success lie two propositions. The first is that the basis and rationale for all its activities have remained unchanged since the very beginning namely, to provide opportunities, founded on Christian values, for people to grow in body mind and spirit. The second is that the Y always been ready and alert to the need to change the way its programmes are delivered in order to keep in step with cultural and societal changes while remaining steadfast to its core values. When founded, the Y provided programmes principally to help poor young men. To day you don't have to be either poor or young, nor even a man to benefit from the YMCA programmes. Today the programmes are available to both men and women of all ages and from all socio economic

sectors reflecting the societal changes that have in the Association's 168-year history.

Now I should confess to you now that I grew up in England and in Australia wedded to the cubs, then the sea scouts and then the sea cadets and although like everybody else, I was generally aware of the YMCA and what it did, I never took advantage of the programmes on offer. Indeed, it was not until I was asked to open this Convention did I realise that I was not aware of all the programmes that are delivered by the Y. So I set about informing myself and I have to say that I was absolutely staggered at the reach and breadth of the Y in this country and elsewhere in the world. I have no doubt that everyone here is well aware of the diversity and reach of the Y's programmes, but I am unashamedly going to summarily rehearse that diversity and reach here this morning for it is something of which all of you can be very proud. You offer, principally the youth, programmes to develop fitness and a healthy lifestyle and programmes to grow leadership capabilities. Your camping programmes foster a culture of respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment. You have an Institute of Education and Training that provides a wide range of community based education, training and employment services across Australia. You are the largest provider of swimming lessons in Australia, with over 140 YMCA owned and managed pools across the nation, where each year your qualified staff teach over 400,000 Australians how to swim.

On any given night in Australia you provide budget priced accommodation for more than 1,800 people. You help those who have run foul of the law with Juvenile Justice Programmes, Youth Outreach and Counseling for Youth in Crisis. You even run Child Care Services. Indeed, my Aide-de-Camp here rang the YMCA here in Hobart the other week to get a copy of the programme for this convention and afterwards told me he could hear young children playing in the background and thought that he rung the crèche by mistake. Well he did ring the crèche but it was no mistake it was at the Y! Running crèches is just another thing that the Y does!!

Your web site tells me that in Australia it is estimated that each year there are 20 million visits to the Y. That is an amazing number given that the estimated population of our country today is just short of 23 million men women and children.

So, this morning, as you start your convention, I salute you and unreservedly congratulate you. The contribution of the YMCA in this country and elsewhere in the world to the education and well-being of community must be bigger and more influential than that of any other agency or organisation.

I don't know what Mr Wilkie is going to tell you in a moment in his address entitled, "What will Australia expect of large national charities like the Y as we move towards 2020?" but what I hope is

that you keep on doing what you have been doing so well for 160 years now. I have pleasure in formally opening your 50th biennial Convention and wish you well in your discussions and deliberations. Australia needs the YMCA.