

**A RECEPTION TO MARK THE CENTENARY OF THE OPENING  
OF ST VIRGIL'S COLLEGE IN HOBART BY THE HONOURABLE  
PETER UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA AND  
MRS UNDERWOOD, THURSDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2011**

It is a great pleasure for me and my wife to welcome you all to Government House this evening to a reception to mark the centenary of the opening of St Virgil's College. There are over 200 Old Virgilians and their partners here this evening. You have come from all parts of Australia; even from as far afield as Darwin and a few of you have even come back to the island for this event from overseas, such is the affection that old Scholars have for their school.

According to Tim Jetson's history of the College<sup>1</sup> funds to build and run the school were raised (quote) by "[d]onations of varying amounts [that] came from all quarters of the island and from priests of varying rank and order. The Archbishop travelled throughout the island prodding consciences and prising open the purses of his flock." Has anything changed Your Grace in the last 100 years?

It was a grand opening on that day the 22nd January 100 years ago. But I don't suppose anyone there on that day would have dreamed that 100 years on the College would be educating more than 700 boys in grades 3 to 10. For the Christian Brothers it was a vision that Mr Jetson described as splendid in the extreme. The Brothers' rhetoric in 1911 would indeed, put to shame the copy of today's advertising executives. It ran like this:

---

<sup>1</sup> St Virgil's College 1911 - 1994

“A few years in a school like St Virgil’s imparts to youth the charm of refinement and culture and fits them to take their places among their fellow men as leaders and thinkers ... The small monetary sacrifice will be repaid by seeing youth of higher intelligence, higher culture and greater efficiency. The family, the district, and the State at large will receive a hundred fold in return”

A bit over the top I thought when I read that, but as I look around this room tonight, and see all the charm and refinement that clearly has been imparted I think that maybe the Christian Brothers ‘ description of a St Virgil’s boy was right right!!!!

Now my wife who is the musical director at Government House thought that we should provide something special to celebrate this very special birthday of St Virgil’s College but I’ll let her explain it to you.

Just before I do, I’d like to add my very warm welcome to that of my husband. As a St Mary’s College old scholar I am absolutely *delighted* to have a ballroom full of St Virgil’s boys. But I thought what would Mother Imelda say? Mother Imelda was the Principal of St Mary’s when I was there and in those days congregating in public with St Virgil’s boys was a punishable misdemeanor. In fact meeting a St Virgil’s boy on a street corner was considered such a serious occasion of sin that St Mary’s College finished school 20 minutes later than St Virgil’s College, in order to remove the temptation before we

girls hit the street. But I *now* understand that there was a real risk of succumbing to temptation, because they were boys with charm, refinement, higher intelligence, higher culture and greater efficiency.

So, I am really looking forward tonight to having unbridled access to those young men of charm and sophistication, whom I didn't get to meet on street corners all those years ago.

Now, as the Governor said, we like to provide something special for special occasion receptions. So this evening we have invited a chamber choir that, rather aptly for tonight, call themselves Loose Canon. I can assure you that although they sing in canon, it is anything but loose. Most of them like Tony Mc Gee, your hard working centenary chair and me are members of the TSO Chorus as indeed is their conductor tonight, Di O'Toole. For you Loose Canon will sing "Sing we and chant it" by Thomas Morley (c 1557- 1602), "Bobby Shaftoe", Trad., arranged by David Willcocks ( 1919- ) and "Celebration" by ....wait for it , A Beatle, Paul Mc Cartney (1942-)

Ladies and gentlemen Loose Canon.