



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS VICTORIAN AWARDS**

**Speech by Mr Anthony Howard AM QC**

**Thursday 6 May 2021**

**Mr Ross Pinney**, President, Australian Red Cross

**Dr Garry Nolan AM**, Chairman, Victorian Divisional Advisory Board

**Mrs Joanne Nolan**

**Ms Kate Siebert**, Acting Director (Victoria), Australian Red Cross

**Other office holders**

**Distinguished guests**

**Award recipients**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good Morning all. As your Patron, I am delighted to welcome you all to the Red Cross Victorian Awards ceremony for 2021. The Governor has asked me to extend her warmest wishes to you today.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I also acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land on which we meet and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and any Elders who may be here today.

I often say it is a pleasure to be with one group or another but given the challenges of last year and the fact that COVID prevented us from meeting in 2020, I am sure you will all agree it really is a pleasure to be meeting here for this year's Awards, and – so as to comply with COVID distance requirements – to be doing so on this one-off occasion in the magnificent Ballroom at Government House.

Of course, Government House is of great significance to Red Cross as it was in this very building that the Australian Red Cross was established by Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, wife of the

Governor-General, only eight days after WW1 was declared on 5 August 1914. Thereafter, 100s of Red Cross volunteers and staff worked tirelessly in this very room to pack supplies for Australian troops fighting overseas.

As I have said before, volunteering is the ultimate act of goodwill. It demonstrates an individual's passion and kindness, generosity of spirit and a willingness to contribute to our community. The same approach applies to members of the organization. All of this is embodied in the Awards about to be presented and recipients should feel proud that they stand as role models to the almost 1900 Red Cross members and more than 3800 volunteers in Victoria.

Before turning to the Awards, I think it worth noting two years have passed since our last ceremony. During that time, Red Cross has been challenged by some incredible natural disasters and a deadly pandemic, which continues to shatter individual lives and the social fabric of communities throughout the world. In that context, I want to note three significant achievements of Red Cross during 2019 and 2020 (by no means an adequate summary!).

- First, the Red Cross response to the Victorian summer fires of 2020 involved 86 days of activation; it coordinated 250 tons of emergency food to over 20 isolated communities; and engaged 500 volunteers to provide psycho-social first aid and registration to support evacuation and reunification activity (including the biggest ever naval evacuation in peacetime maritime history).
- Secondly, as at the end of March 2021, the *Migrant Support Program*, set up in July 2020 to assist people on temporary visas who were ineligible for other financial assistance, has now made a total of \$20m worth of payments to 30,000 temporary visa holders.
- Lastly, the COVID Outreach program, known as the *Community Activation & Social Isolation Initiative*, has connected over 16,000 people to necessary services; and checked on 47,000 people to ensure they are linked into appropriate services. Calls are being made to people over 70, single mums and people living with a disability.

There can be no doubt that service in the Red Cross is about caring for disadvantaged people in our community; according dignity to the vulnerable and making all people feel that they are valued and not alone in their time of need. To use the great words of the Victorian motto, such service promotes *peace and prosperity* in our land.

I commend the Chair and the Board, and all members and volunteers for their remarkable and enduring contribution to our community. And I congratulate all Award recipients for their conspicuous and dedicated service – especially those two being recognised for 50 years' service.