



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

OFFICIAL OPENING OF RED CROSS VICTORIA

Tuesday 8 April 2025

Acknowledgments

Dr Garry Nolan AM, Chairman, Victorian Divisional Advisory Board and **Nichola Krey**, State Director, Australian Red Cross Victoria

Charles Burkett, President and **Andrew Colvin AO**, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Red Cross

Other members and staff of the Australian Red Cross

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this building stands – the Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin Nation – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It's a pleasure to join you today, as Patron of Australian Red Cross Victoria, to officially open this new Office.

The link between our institutions is a longstanding one, and I'm pleased to be able to continue this Vice-Regal connection today.

As many of you may know, the Australian Red Cross was founded in 1914 by Lady Munro Ferguson, wife of the then Governor-General, who was residing in Government House at the time.

Lady Stanley, the wife of the then-Governor of Victoria, took on the role of the inaugural President of the society.

You may have seen the old photos of Red Cross volunteers using the Government House Ballroom as a depot for the collection and dispatch of items for troops during World War I.

When the guns finally fell silent at the end of the war, the organisation faced an uncertain future.

By 1920, Sir Arthur Stanley had concluded his tenure as Governor and had returned to Britain with Lady Stanley.

Sir Arthur penned a letter to the Victorian Division of the Australian Red Cross, which was read as the Division's annual meeting.

In it, he reflected on the 'happy memory' of his work with the Society, but went on to say:

"The immediate work of the Red Cross is now at an end, but I am confident that the [experience] gained of the unity and generosity of the people of Victoria will be of lasting service to the State."

Established during war, once the troops returned home there was a 'marked diminution' in the scale of the Society's work.

And since then, it has successfully mobilised vast resources and invigorated a spirit of volunteerism within the community – but it needed new avenues to direct and maintain it.

It would take time for the modern identity and purpose of Red Cross Australia to take shape.

Slowly but surely, the organisation expanded the scope of its work.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the organisation extended its services, reaching almost half a million members.

It mobilised to support Australians through some of the worst natural disasters we've experienced as a nation – from the Hunter Valley floods of 1955 to Cyclone Tracy, to the Ash Wednesday and Black Saturday bushfires.

Today, Red Cross Australia supports countless people through the entire recovery process, for all kinds of crises.

The opening of this Office marks a new chapter in this story of service, as the Red Cross continues to evolve and meet the contemporary needs of our time.

With enhanced accessibility and sustainability, I am sure that these facilities will serve you well in this mission.

Congratulations to all of you for the important work you do each and every day, that will no doubt continue in this new home for years to come.

Thank you.