



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

ORDER OF ST JOHN INVESTITURE CEREMONY

Tuesday 5 August 2025

Acknowledgments

Cameron Oxley, Chancellor of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John

Mark Engel, Chairman, St John Ambulance Victoria

Gordon Botwright, CEO, St John Ambulance Victoria

Postulants

Distinguished guests

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

The link between our institutions is a longstanding one.

Many of you would be aware that Victorian Governors have provided Vice-Regal patronage to St John Ambulance in Victoria since it was established over 140 years ago.

Many of the traditions that remain with us today find their origins in those early years, where successive Governors offered their support to the founders of this organisation.

It is a pleasure to continue this Vice-Regal connection this evening.

However, the fact that the St John Ambulance Association of Victoria was founded with Vice-Regal support does not account for its sustained growth in the many decades since.

Organisations are delicate constructs and are always vulnerable to changes in the environment in which they operate.

The achievement is not so much the length of time in operation, but the way in which it has been sustained.

That success depends on two key factors – being able to communicate a purpose with clarity, and attracting and retaining people who are committed to the cause.

This is at the heart of what we are honouring here tonight.

For decades, the St John motto of 'For the Service of Humanity' has been the banner under which generations of Victorians have discovered that sense of purpose.

Without fostering this spirit, the organisation would have been left behind as a historical artefact of the era in which it was founded.

That it continues to thrive today is testament to the enduring appeal of its mission.

To put it simply – when you have a clear purpose, you have a reason for people to stick around.

That's even more important when it comes to organisations with a large volunteer base.

It's a sentiment summarised well by Barbara Davis, a St John volunteer of 74 years.

Barbara has said of her experience with St John that "you do not stay for that long unless you feel you're getting a lot back."

I'm sure that rings true for all of you here.

Over the years, the work of St John Ambulance Victoria has been sustained by so many stories – just like Barbara's – of people who have found a sense of belonging here.

This year also marks a centenary of St John Youth in Australia – a reflection of your ongoing commitment to invigorating this same feeling within the next generation.

We can mark these milestones, just as we can count the numbers of active volunteers and tally their combined hours of service.

What is much harder to measure is the indirect benefits from these acts of service for countless Victorians.

There are those who continue to live active and fulfilling lives after receiving your care and support.

There are those who have gone on to help others in need after receiving your training.

And there are those who have developed lifelong skills through your programs, now deployed in other areas of work.

Tonight's investiture is a recognition of the people behind the efforts that make this all possible.

To those of you receiving honours, I'd like to thank you for your dedication to your community.

Your contributions form part of the long and proud story that is the St John Ambulance Victoria – a story that will continue be written for years to come.

Thank you.