

ADDRESS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**ADDRESS TO CANBERRA YWCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
YWCA OF CANBERRA, LONDON CIRCUIT  
12 OCTOBER 2009

Thank you for your warm welcome.

I want you to know how delighted I am to join you today, to have this opportunity to express my very sincere regard and affection for the Y, and to congratulate the Canberra YWCA on a magnificent milestone - your 80th anniversary.

My profound respect and admiration for the YWCA are long standing. I enjoyed immensely my years as a member of the Board of the Sydney Y, and my involvement at a national level during the '70s and '80s. And, more recently, my engagement with the Toowoomba Branch in Queensland.

All of these experiences gave me friendships that have been enriching, important, and influential in my life.

I am mindful of them as I stand here this evening.

I am deeply conscious of how much this organisation has contributed to our society.

It has been a rich and effervescent chapter in the broader Australian narrative, bringing with it a global network and a local affinity.

You have been staunch advocates and defenders of the finest values: inclusivity, diversity, equality, empowerment, leadership, underpinned by a robust tradition and a proud and fascinating history.

I am inspired by the YWCA's early years and by your founders - visionaries who had the intuition and foresight to invest in property and real estate, while providing accessible accommodation for women.

There have been so many true benefactors with a deep sense of commitment. One known to many, is Dame Beryl Beaurepaire, who served on the National Finance Committee, and helped establish the YWCA Ethical Balanced Investment Trust, the Y pioneered ethical investment in this country, and creative and practical solutions to economic and social disadvantage.

In 2009 the Y is one of the leading community organisations worldwide, vibrant and engaging, with a strong portfolio of services and projects, and the highest standards of professionalism, vigour and responsiveness.

I find it inspiring to reflect on the way this organisation with its roots in the 19th Century meets the challenge of being thoroughly contemporary.

An outstanding example of that, and one we all take pride in, is that a young Australian woman, barrister Susan Brennan, is World President.

Recruited to the National Board in her 20s, and to the world presidency in her 30s, Ms Brennan is a fine role model and guide for Y women around the world.

My friends, today is an opportunity to enjoy and savour your achievements and qualities as the colourful backdrop to your own story.

The Y in Canberra has been one of the most influential and fruitful of our YWCAs.

I was enthralled by the record of its beginnings, and the picture it conjured of Hilda Tapley Short, known as 'Tapley', alighting at Canberra railway station in March 1929 to take up the position of the first General Secretary.

She came here at the invitation of the Federal Government, who felt that the young women of Canberra would benefit enormously from the presence of a YWCA.

Tapley walked the streets, meeting young women randomly at hostels and bus stops, at the Hockey Club. Her first 100 women gathered for a party in the Y's new premises: the Sydney Building in East Row.

From this spark grew more circles - debaters, readers, ramblers, singers. I love the idea of their suppers after Friday night shopping, and afternoon tea on Sundays. Such joie de vivre and camaraderie.

A candlelight ceremony welcomed the first self-governing club - the Cheerio Club in Kingston. Different coloured candles represented the Club's values: Rose for sport, purple for knowledge, blue for friendship, red for love, yellow for ideals, and gold for the Blue Triangle.

In her inaugurating speech, Tapley said "Girls can make of the community what they will."

These words heralded an impressive blossoming for the Y in Canberra.

Today, you are involved in a wide range of projects, all expressing your inner conviction of the worth and dignity of human life, and the possibilities in enabling women to reach their full potential.

I am impressed by your efforts:

- . in childcare - centre-based, family daycare and after school care;
- . in the Walking School Bus - encouraging kids to enjoy safe and healthy lives;
- . in the youth services of SCOPE and Lanyon Youth Centre;
- . your community development work and Family Housing Outreach Service;
- . helping four and a half thousand Canberrans every day.

And there are many more on your horizons, in your plans for 2022.

Your 80th birthday is a jubilant celebration of all that you stand for and share. It offers a moment to reflect on your passage, on the place where you have arrived, and where you might go to next.

I am truly grateful to be part of your celebrations and AGM today. I look forward to getting to know you better in my years here, and seeing your story continue.

My friends, thank you.