

**ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR-GENERAL, HER EXCELLENCY, QUENTIN BRYCE
GOOD SAMs FOUNDATION FUNDRAISING BREAKFAST, FRIDAY APRIL 20, 2012**

Mr Patrick Mullins
Chairman, Sisters of the Good Samaritan Foundation

The Honourable Teresa Gambaro
Federal Member for Brisbane

The Honourable Tracey Davis
Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Sister Clare Condon

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your warm welcome.

I am thrilled and delighted to be with you for breakfast to celebrate the contribution by the Good Samaritans Foundation to our community and its support for the outstanding work of the Good Sams, as the sisters are affectionately known.

Work that reflects the finest values of care and compassion inspired by the much loved parable of the Good Samaritan.

It's lovely to be home, to be reminded of very happy times with you, sharing the warmth, generous spirit and commitment to service that you signify.

Breakfasts at the Kookaburra Café jammed in – music, joie de vivre, uplifting conversations about making a difference, about giving and understanding.

And always in my heart will be the joyousness of the 150th Anniversary of the Congregation.

The Eucharist celebration for the Sisters at St. Stephen's on a memorable sparkling morning, the glorious music, the loving nostalgia flowed as we honoured the first Catholic religious congregation to be founded in Australia.

Among the very special events to mark that great occasion was the striking of a rose – my very favourite colour – hot pink.

We planted four of them at Femberg with a specially engraved spade.

Of course there were a few speeches.

I listened to the beautiful evocative words of Sister Clare.

I asked her, was she the Good Sams poet: "No, my dear," she said with a slightly pejorative smile – "the Psalms."

My mother would have been appalled by my ignorance.

I love the story of those 5 young women who brought together by Archbishop Polding so long ago to support and protect vulnerable women and their children on the streets in Sydney.

It is a story of practical hands on help that has been handed down through generations, reaching across our country and the Asia Pacific region.

Today the Sisters of the Good Samaritan Foundation assists homeless women and children, marginalised people, people in serious need due to social circumstances beyond their control.

Key projects are dedicated to providing safe accommodation for women and children to escape domestic violence – women and little ones who would otherwise be homeless.

This morning I want to express my admiration and respect for the Foundation's role in Brisbane supported Transitional Housing Project.

In partnership with St. Vincent de Paul Society, the purpose of this project is to ensure that victims of domestic violence have somewhere to go, to shelter, transitional accommodation.

Furnished housing that offers safe, secure and affordable accommodation for women and their children for 6-12 months with counselling, before long term accommodation is sought.

Across my life I have sat many times with women and their children in places of refuge, hiding, frightened, living in constant fear, traumatised by violence, by deprivation, degradation, bruised in every way.

Tragically one in three women in Australia in their lifetime will be affected by domestic violence.

Almost one in four Australian children will witness violence against their mother.

Every week in Australia, two family members, including children, are killed by loved ones.

The Good Samaritan Foundation is responding to these horrific facts.

My friends, domestic and family violence is the major cause of homelessness for women and their children.

Thank you, my friends, for taking action – doing something about it.

Thank you for what you do, and for the support that so many of you give.

Putting the Parable into practice.

Mr Chairman, may I conclude with an uplifting postscript to our sobering task at hand.

Last month, March, I visited eight Pacific Island countries – enriching, rewarding, learning experiences.

Whenever I have the honour to represent our country overseas I am always enormously proud of our fellow Australians whom I see making extraordinary contributions in practical aid and development programs – needed so desperately by many of our neighbours in this region.

In Kiribati, that remote nation of 33 low lying coral atolls, 103,000 people are faced with enormous challenges, environmental, lack of employment and so many opportunities.

At a memorable state lunch hosted by the President I was thrilled to meet two Good Sams: Sister Marie O'Shea and Sister Judy Margetts.

They work in education, community affairs, and pastoral care and both are involved in women's development.

They are much loved and respected in the community.

I told them about this morning's breakfast and I promised to bring you their warmest greetings.

We didn't have much time together but we managed to get a bit of talking in.

I will always remember them – a source of courage, support and inspiration.

My friends, thank you for including me in this heartwarming gathering – your circle of care.

I give you my warmest encouragement in your vitally important work. <ends>