



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

ORDER OF ST JOHN PARADE

Sunday 11 November, 2018

Mrs Virginia Bourke, Chairman, St John Ambulance Victoria

Mr Gordon Botwright, Chief Executive Officer, St. John Ambulance Victoria

Mr Iain West, Acting Victorian State Coroner

Mr Andrew Crisp APM, Emergency Management Commissioner

Superintendent Nigel Howard, Representing the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police

Today's Awardees and all our distinguished guests

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us this afternoon.

Tony and I are pleased to welcome you to Government House today to recognise the contribution of St John Ambulance Victoria, of which I am the proud Patron.

I was disappointed that I was unable to attend the Order of St John Investitures in July, so I am particularly pleased to join you today to honour the work and achievements of your volunteer members.

It is a remarkable thought that the history of St John within Victoria dates back to 1883, when a group met and the commitment was made to teach First Aid classes.

However, as you all know, the origin of the Order of St John can be traced back so very much further – more than 900 years, in fact. Then, in Jerusalem a hospice was borne to offer care to pilgrims, the sick and the injured.

Although it has evolved and moved with the times to meet contemporary needs, like all organisations with longevity, the Order of St John has stayed true to its original mission and values: seeking to save lives through First Aid.

Nowadays, the 'pilgrims' are most likely those who come from far and wide to participate in the major public and sporting events for which Victoria is renowned.

One of my favourite stories about your great work dates back to my own childhood (so not all that long ago!) I like it because it involves footy, and my husband and my beloved Essendon Bombers. And it serves as a perfect example of how St John assistance has been a consistent feature of public life in our State.

It happened at the 1959 Grand Final between Essendon and Melbourne [let's not discuss who won]. A St John Ambulance Brigade cadet was called upon to help deliver a baby! Not an altogether unusual event for first responders, I imagine. But this cadet was only 9 years old at the time! He stayed by the mother's side, calmly offering encouragement until older St John members arrived with backup – and blankets.

It is like the many stories of generous and caring help offered by your volunteers across the decades since.

Just last year, more than 2,000 volunteers delivered First Aid services at more than 4,500 public gatherings. They helped almost 30,000 people and provided more than 300,000 hours of service to the community.

Behind each of the people helped, at each of those events, is a story. A story of need. A story of fear. A story of relief and gratitude for the care that was offered when urgently or unexpectedly needed. Not only care by way of professional first aid, but by way of reassurance as well.

And behind each of the volunteers who helped, there is also a story.

People with their own study, work and family commitments. People with their own hobbies and interests. People who put other things and others ahead of all those responsibilities and

choices. Who are prepared to put time and energy into learning the skills to offer to others. People who are prepared to give of their time and their energy.

You, our awardees today, are certainly such people. So, on behalf of the Victorian community, we welcome this opportunity to thank you. Victorians are safer, healthier and more secure due to your care and professionalism.

We look forward to meeting many of you shortly.

And of course we thank the Chair, the board and the dedicated staff of St John, who also give so much to so many.