



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

INTERPLAST 35TH ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday 27th March 2019

Mr Keith Mutimer, President, Interplast Australia & New Zealand, and Board Members

Ms Prue Ingram, CEO, Interplast Australia & New Zealand

Mr Mike Rolls, Amabassador for Interplast Australia & New Zealand

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

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 evening.

Tony and I are delighted to welcome you to Government House to celebrate the 35th anniversary of Interplast Australia and New Zealand.

In this role, we have the most privileged vantage point from which to see good work....great work. What we have seen up close is that when you have good people with good ideas and goodwill, great things can be achieved.

Interplast provides the perfect illustration.

As I am sure most of you are well aware, Interplast Australia and New Zealand began in the early 1980s after two Rotarians, Dr Gerald Duff and Governor Doug Mills discussed the impressive aid work being done by Interplast (USA), sending voluntary medical teams to carry out plastic and reconstructive surgery in developing countries.

Shortly after, in 1983, thanks to a partnership between the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and Rotary, our own program was born.

The initial trip sent a volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgical team to Samoa, fully funded by Rotary District 980, to deliver free medical treatment programs.

From those small beginnings, our surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses and allied health professionals have since then conducted 26,000 surgical procedures, and undertaken some 45,000 patient consultations in more than 1000 programs across 25 different countries in the Asia Pacific region.

They have also broadened the range of conditions that they treat and, importantly, developed a strong focus on teaching and sharing their medical expertise in those countries.

And so, today we recognise 35 years of 'repairing bodies and rebuilding lives'. Thirty-five years of facilitating volunteers to perform life changing operations. And many years of helping to build sustainable health systems across the region.

It can be difficult to quantify the impact of each surgery performed. Frequently, it is a new independence for the individual patient. The capacity for a normal life of schooling or work. The liberation of a parent to work. Overall, untold benefits for the individual, their family and, in turn, their community.

What proud achievements in just 35 years. And what a great legacy has been built.

Personally, I became aware of Interplast through two particular sources.

One was Dr Alan Breidahl, about 20 years ago. It was on a beach. He was in a wet-suit, having been called in from the surf to attend to our young son who had received a nasty gash on his face from an errant surfboard during a Nippers' Carnival. How lucky we were that he was there.

The other person who raised my awareness is our good friend, David Inglis AM. He needs no introduction in this room, having travelled the Interplast journey with you from his time as a young lawyer, through to his time as, well, an older lawyer! But of course having filled leadership positions with you along the way.

What a pleasure it will be for me to invest him as a Member of the Order of Australia next week, recognising his wonderful contribution. Congratulations David.

I would like to thank the many volunteers who selflessly give their time, energy and skills to conduct the consultations, surgeries, mentoring and teaching.

Your generosity and goodwill is an extraordinary asset not only to our State, and to Australia, but to the whole region beyond our nation's borders.

Speaking of volunteers, thank you also to the Board of Directors. Your time and expertise contributes to every aspect of this lifesaving organisation.

May I also thank the important contribution made by the many donors who support the work of Interplast.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the leadership and vision of Mr Keith Mutimer, the President of Interplast Australia and New Zealand.

That leaves me to say Happy 35th birthday Interplast. We wish you well in your continuing work.