



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **ORDER OF ST JOHN INVESTITURE**

**Tuesday 6 August 2024**

### **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

**Rick Nugent**, Emergency Management Commissioner, Emergency Management Victoria

### **Postulants**

### **Distinguished guests**

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

At the back of this room, through the large wooden doors, lies the Ballroom. Originally designed for grand balls and musical events, it's surprising to learn that its most famous use is drastically different from the purpose for which it was designed.

At the outbreak of World War One, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, wife of Governor-General Ronald Munro, transformed the ballroom into a space to provide aid to the war effort.

Gone were the gowns and tailcoats.

Instead, the Ballroom was packed with thousands of primarily women volunteers. Dedicated to helping Australians at home and abroad.

The transformation began with a meeting in this very House, involving Lady Munro and Dr. Arthur Sherwin from the St John Ambulance Brigade.

Dr. Sherwin led the Voluntary Aid Detachments in Victoria, where St John taught first aid and home nursing.

This qualified Victorians to support those ill or injured around them.

And it also fostered a strong community spirit during that time of great crisis – ensuring that help was close at hand.

While this may be the first time at Government House for some of you – The Order of St John has a deep connection here.

Since its founding, St John has risen to the challenge in times of need.

Last year, St John trained over 170,000 Victorians and served 12.1 million more.

Each Victorian you supported represents a moment of need where you made a difference. And every single one of those Victorians supported adds to the legacy that St John has built, maintained and grown for more than 140 years.

These moments may not lead the 6pm news – but to those Victorians, and their families, your support is unforgettable.

It is a great privilege to welcome you all to Government House today to recognise your diligent and selfless work.

The Order of St John Investitures expresses the profound gratitude for your efforts in the Victorian community.

To the 18 receiving honours, I'd like to thank you on behalf of Victorians for empowering and supporting communities across the State.

I'd also like to acknowledge Commanders Alistair Dunn and Tony Smith.

And I'd like to congratulate Chairman Mark Engel for his deserved promotion to Officer.

To all recipients, your commitment to St John's cause has been exemplary.

This ceremony represents a recognition for the good that you have brought to your community.

A recognition deserved and part of the enduring legacy of St John.

Thank you.