



NATIONAL WALK FOR VALUES SYDNEY

Saturday, 12 April 2008 – Sydney

Volunteers and Values

Speech given by

Mrs Leeanne Barber, Lady Mayoress

First, I wish to acknowledge the Barramattagal Clan of the Darug people as traditional owners of this land ... and pay my respect to a people whose ancient cultures and values enrich our whole society. And, I also pay my respects to the Elders, past and present.

And thanks Uncle Greg for that welcome to country. I am sure it was inspiring to each and everyone of us.

I speak on behalf of my husband, and the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Paul Barber who at short notice can't be here. He asked me to pass on his apologies to you But it's a real pleasure to deliver you all a warm welcome to Parramatta. I am thrilled as I consider myself a true Parramatta native as I was born in Parramatta Hospital, which is now the Justice precinct.

This is a City and a community of astonishing diversity - with so many different faiths, cultures, languages and traditions. Until you begin to understand the soul of a place like Parramatta, it might surprise people that everyone here seems to get on so well... and that this is a fairly tolerant and harmonious place.

One reason, I think, is that Parramatta seems to inspire a good community spirit, a strong sense of social justice... and a lot of very busy volunteers.

Volunteers, people inspired by the value of community, are really our social cement.

They are the foundations and the builders of our civic society.

Take the Parramatta City Mission. For Paul and myself, the Mission is a continuing inspiration. People talk about how the level of volunteerism in our society has declined, but at the Mission the numbers just keep coming in.

More and more volunteers are preparing and delivering food and services to the less fortunate, and doing it with love.

Let me tell you... there is no more inspiring sight on Christmas Day in Parramatta - especially when you know that this happens on so many other days.

But there's a whole strata of activities in this town which are sustained by volunteers inspired by the right values.

I'm talking about people passionately working in our local youth organisations, in arts and cultural groups, in the cubs and scouts, in religious and school groups. I'm talking about people working selflessly with seniors groups, with prisoners and other marginalised people, working in charity organisations, with the lonely, and in bush care and other environmental groups.

There are people at work in Parramatta taking care of families and individuals within their own ethnic community... and taking care of people beyond their own ethnic community.

Many of these people are working to raise our awareness, to open our eyes... to educational opportunities, to global warming, to injustices, to respect cultural differences or ... just as a witness to the power of human compassion.

They work without financial reward and without acclaim. They are people who have values which drive their lives and give them a purpose... and that purpose is our immense gain as a community.

They are, I think, people like you.

I congratulate you all for walking today to mark such values

And I hope you continue to have an inspiring day of good value!