

Morning Tea for Mrs Rosemary Burkitt OAM
SPEECH by Mrs Tessa Pauling
Patron of Red Cross Northern Territory
Government House – 9 April 2009

The Honourable Austin Asche and Dr Valerie Asche, Members of the Board and Executive of the Australian Red Cross Northern Territory, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Patron of Australian Red Cross Northern Territory, I would like to welcome you to Government House. Over the past eighteen months, one of the most enjoyable functions of our position has been attending the Investitures for those whose outstanding contributions and achievements are recognised in the Australian Honours System.

In 2002, Rosemary Burkitt, you were awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community, particularly through the Home Help Service of the Northern Territory Division of the Australian Red Cross. That was the formal citation.

Today, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to publicly recognise the full extent of your contribution to the Northern Territory community and to thank you for your dedication to the Red Cross Care Services. Under your guidance, this service has developed from a small part-time activity in 1985 to being one of today's leading providers.

When we began to contact those who know you, Rosemary, we received a litany of praise and respect and I quote: *Exceptionally easy to deal with and phenomenally caring; thoughtful regarding clients' circumstances, keen to meet with people to ensure that progressing difficult situations and helping challenging clients was possible.*

Growing old, like growing up, is a difficult process; and as Eleanor Roosevelt said: *Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art.*

Your commitment over the past thirty-three years has been absolute. No doubt once you retire, Rosemary, you will volunteer and set off once again spreading the message of care. Whether it be as Deputy Chairperson of the Disability Advisory Committee, in continued work with the Auxiliary of the Royal Darwin Hospital, or in some other voluntary position.

The Honourable Julie Bishop, when she was Minister for the Aging, stated: *Community care is a fundamental, an essential, an enduring part of our aged care system.*

Compassion is not a natural skill – it is a precious gift and you, Rosemary, are truly gifted. I would therefore like to personally thank you once again for making a huge difference to many people's lives and to present this Certificate of Commendation, on behalf of The Australian Red Cross.