



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MOTIONS**

**Australian Red Cross Centenary**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 1 September 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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# SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 1 September 2014  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Prentice, Jane, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

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**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (10:31): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) the Australian Red Cross (ARC) was founded in 1914 following the outbreak of World War I; and

(b) hundreds of thousands of volunteers signed up during World War I, and by World War II the ARC had become Australia's largest charitable organisation with nearly half a million members out of a population of seven million;

(2) recognises that the ARC has served the Australian people for the last 100 years, most notably through its immediate response to national disasters, blood service, and everyday work to help vulnerable people;

(3) values the important contribution of volunteers and staff across the country through their local ARC including members, branches and committees; and

(4) acknowledges the ARC's proud history of service in its centenary year.

I rise today as co-chair of Parliamentary Friends of Australian Red Cross to join with my colleagues from all political spectrums sponsoring this motion to acknowledge a century of service by the Australian Red Cross. Since 1914 the Australian Red Cross has bound together the power of humanity to give relief to those in crisis, and 30 August 2014 marked the centenary anniversary of the Australian Red Cross, making it one of Australia's longest-running volunteer organisations.

Although the International Committee of the Red Cross was formed in 1862, the Australian division of the Red Cross was established a week after the outbreak of World War I, in August 1914. A century later it continues to deliver much-needed services to the Australian and international community. Whether it is a hurricane, an earthquake or a tsunami, the Australian Red Cross is always one of the first organisations to provide much-needed relief. The Australian aid program has a partnership agreement with the Australian Red Cross. This means that we are providing \$9 million in funding this year to support humanitarian training, disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities in disaster-prone countries in our region. In addition, we fund the Australian Red Cross to implement development projects such as health services in Afghanistan and water sanitation and hygiene—WASH—in Bangladesh and Nepal. During humanitarian crises, Australia regularly channels additional funding to the Australian Red Cross to assist vulnerable and disaster affected people.

The Australian Red Cross is also the managing partner of the Australian Volunteers for International Development program. Initially, the purpose of the Australian Red Cross was to seek ways in which the inadequacies of the army medical services could best be overcome so as to alleviate the discomfort and pain suffered by those wounded in the conflicts of the First World War. The Australian community bound together in an effort like no other to make large amounts of clothing, socks, vests, mittens, pyjamas and linens for the war effort. From the date of its inception until the armistice, the Red Cross dispatched a total of 395,695 food parcels and 36,339 clothing parcels.

The Australian attitude of mateship has most definitely been enhanced by the presence of the Red Cross in the community, with a legacy of companionship lasting to the present day. It is with the help of the Australian Red Cross that the generous culture of our nation has been fostered. The centenary year of Red Cross in Australia is therefore a significant milestone in the social history of our nation, as it marks 100 years of humanitarian service to the people of Australia.

As a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III, my father still speaks about the Red Cross parcels when recounting his experiences of that time. I acknowledge that much of Australian society shares a personal connection with the Red Cross whether through volunteering or receiving help themselves. As a member of the now western suburbs branch of the Red Cross for 20 years, a disaster volunteer and a former Queensland board member, I have seen firsthand the outstanding work undertaken by Red Cross volunteers, from knitting literally thousands of trauma teddies to running the Red Cross shops, and their invaluable contribution at times of disasters such as the Childers backpackers hostel fire, the Bali bombings and the devastating floods and fires in Australia.

The Red Cross, from an extremely important role played during both world wars to assisting with many natural disasters and providing assistance and response to situations involving vulnerable individuals and communities, has been recognised by the Australian government over the years. The Australian government highly values the efforts performed by the Red Cross as an association, and each individual who has chosen to volunteer their time or donate blood. It is a great testament to humanity's willingness to help those in need that the movement is scattered around 189 countries worldwide. The Australian Red Cross boasts over 1 million volunteers—members, staff, donors, aid workers and supporters alone.

Wednesday 13 August 2014 was indeed a momentous day, marking the 100-year anniversary of the Australian Red Cross. However for the Red Cross and for all those they help, it is just another day when ordinary people work together to achieve extraordinary feats for the betterment of our society and humanity as a whole. On behalf of everyone in this chamber, I say thank you to Red Cross and their volunteers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Mr Mitchell ): Is the motion seconded?

**Ms Landry:** I second the motion.