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For immediate release

NURSES ENJOY ROYAL CELEBRATION

Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) celebrated its 125th anniversary when the Governor-General formally opened a year of celebration this afternoon.

The Governor-General and Mr Bryce were guests of honour at a special event at Eureka Tower, overlooking the city that RDNS has cared for since 1885.

At that time, shanty towns and dire poverty had seen Melbourne strain in the wake of the gold rush, leaving the poor and sick with little medical care.

A concerned group of citizens established the Melbourne District Nursing Society, as RDNS was originally known.

Starting with one nurse, their vision was to provide nursing care to people in their homes and restore hope and health where they could. Earliest records show that two nurses provided care to 363 needy citizens in 1889.

Today, the organisation employs 1,400 staff and each year provides around 1.7 million nursing visits to almost 33,000 people across Greater Melbourne.

RDNS is Australia's oldest and largest provider of home nursing and healthcare.

"As I wish you a happy 125th birthday, I offer my sincere thanks to your staff, who dedicate themselves to this organisation and to the community: to service, to humanity," the Governor-General told the 150 guests.

"For the outstanding contribution you make to our community every single day I have the highest regard: for your skills and your dedication and commitment to the finest values and principles of human service," she said.

CEO Dan Romanis said that the organisation has grown to be a major pillar underpinning the health system, helping people to remain in their homes for longer and giving them increased independence, choice and control in relation to their medical care.

"What started out as a mercy mission to the sick and poor in 1885 has evolved into a large and dynamic healthcare organisation that continues to deliver health, hope and healing to almost 9,500 people every day of the year," he said.

"RDNS has affected the lives of literally millions of people over the last 125 years.

"That is what we are celebrating: the incredible nurses and staff of RDNS who remain steadfast in their commitment, professionalism and dedication to local people and their local communities," Mr Romanis said.

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