



PRIME MINISTER

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP, TO
THE LAUNCH OF THE VICTOR CHANG CARDIAC RESEARCH INSTITUTE
SYDNEY, FEBRUARY 15, 1994

When Senator Richardson suggested that I come along to the launch of the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, I accepted without much resistance.

The Institute promises to do two things which are of irresistible appeal.

First, it honours Victor Chang - a great Australian, a great surgeon and a great humanitarian.

Second, it provides for research into a form of disease suffered by 130,000 Australians and which kills as many as 200 people every week.

In fact, I suspect most people my age live in a certain degree of fear of heart disease, most of us have had friends who have suffered from it or died from it.

Perhaps I should add a third reason why I was keen to say a few words here today - and that is that the Institute will be attached to St Vincents which has an unsurpassed reputation based in equal proportions on its excellence in health care and medical research, and its core values of compassion, human dignity and social justice.

St Vincents is a hospital with a philosophy - and that is something all great institutions need.

And no hospital could have a better philosophy than that provided by the Sisters of Charity.

The Sisters of Charity bring to St Vincents a compassionate web, a family culture which, far from being at odds with modern management principles and strategies, strengthens them - puts humanity into the technocratic void, if you like.

The great thing about St Vincents - and the great thing about this new Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute - is that the highest standards of medical excellence, and the most advanced techniques and technology, are delivered to all Australians regardless of their social and financial circumstances.

And for this we have the mission of the Sisters of Charity to thank.

It goes to show that as health care goes through rapid changes because of advances in medical science and technology, the importance of traditional values is undiminished - though it may be these days even more essential to assert them.

This new Institute will have, as I understand it, three main goals.

First, to improve the lives and life expectancy of all Australians.

Second, to save millions of dollars each year in health costs.

And third, to make internationally recognised contributions to our understanding of heart muscle disease.

It has been fashionable in recent years for all modern corporations and institutions to have what is called a Mission Statement - a document worked up in the company defining common goals and corporate philosophies.

You couldn't have a better Mission Statement for a hospital than the Mission of the Sisters of Charity.

And I daresay you couldn't have a better name to call yourself by than Victor Chang.

I met Dr Chang but did not know him well, but I know people who did and I read the testimonials after his tragic and outrageous death, and I have heard people talking today.

There is no doubting his extraordinary qualities.

It has, perhaps, not been adequately acknowledged that among his great contributions to Australia was the work he did in fostering cooperation between Australian medicine and medical research and medicine in the countries of South-East Asia.

I hope his work as an ambassador for Australia is not forgotten, and that advances made at this Institute which bears his name will flow on to those countries in Asia in which he took such an interest.

He was, as I said, a great man, an marvellous surgeon and, perhaps most of all, a man with a genuine personal concern and understanding for his patients.

It was Victor Chang's great dream to see here at St Vincents Health Care Campus a team of world class researchers pursuing the unique challenges of heart disease.

With the creation of this Research Institute, Victor Chang's dream can be realised.

So, it remains for me to say just two things:

- . First, I urge all Australians to give all they can to this appeal, for in so doing it they will be not only helping to carry on the work and the memory of Victor Chang, helping themselves and their fellow Australians.
- . And second, I congratulate and sincerely thank all those who have given to the cause already - both those who have given money and those who have given their time and their skill and effort.

I declare this Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute officially launched.

SYDNEY

15 February 1994