

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
PRESENTATION OF CHARLES HAWKER SCHOLARSHIPS
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
6 MAY 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen, I acknowledge the traditional keepers of the place where we gather, and I warmly welcome you to Government House this morning, this historic Australian home, immersed in breathtaking Autumn colours.

I am delighted to meet such an outstanding group of scholars, future leaders, individuals and families.

Embarking on unexpected and thrilling ventures - experiences that will be of enormous influence in your lives.

When Kathleen Lilius Needham established these scholarships in her brother's memory, her purpose was that this gift would assist you in reaching your full potential.

Charles Allan Seymour Hawker was a: scholar, soldier, pastoralist, statesman.

He served with distinction on the Western Front in 1915. He was wounded twice: first in Ypres and then a month later in Loos. He lost an eye and endured 14 operations.

He was classified unfit for active service but insisted on returning to his battalion on the front in 1917.

Again he was wounded, this time, severely.

He returned home in 1920, paralysed from the waist.

He defied medical opinion: he learnt to walk again. He studied wool classing, forestry and botany. And in 1929 entered the House of Representatives as Member for Wakefield, and was regarded as an expert on rural affairs.

Ladies and gentlemen, Charles Hawker was a force to be reckoned with.

Australia came to know and admire: his tenacity, his passion, his sincerity.

A loyal and powerful advocate for our country.

His courage and determination, gave rise to the 'Hawker Legend'.

He reassured and influenced those who met him.

'It wasn't so much that he displayed physical courage', wrote a colleague, 'what struck me most deeply about him was that the light never went out inside'.

Sir Keith Hancock recalls him as: "...the best that an Australian can do or be".

My friends, what a privilege it is to be charged with keeping the Hawker legacy alive.

Sarah Elliott. Jacqueline Williams. Emma Greenland. Yen Pham.

I know how hard you have worked to achieve these most generous scholarships.

You are exceptional young Australians: focused, astute, articulate.

Committed to your communities, embracing your civic duties, determined to make a significant contribution to Australia.

Since 1990 the Charles Hawker Memorial Scholarship Trust Fund has awarded: more than \$4 million dollars to 94 young Australians.

And what a contribution they have made in diverse fields: law, politics, economics, medicine, the arts.

Alumni are spread across the world: Asia, the United States, Europe.

Three Hawker Scholars have entered the Rhodes hall of fame: Rachel Buxton, Anthony Roediger, and Phillip Killicoat.

They have joined more than 500 amazing and inspiring young Australians who possess extraordinary qualities and talents.

Last week, in the UK, I was honoured to share some time with Christian Thompson and Paul Gray, Australia's Charles Perkins Scholars, and our first Indigenous students to study at Oxford.

The leadership and intellect of these young Australians, and yours too, will be critical to our nation's efforts to build a society where all Australians thrive.

In you we envision: enhanced communities, and vibrant futures for those who follow.

As you embark on your journey, I hope your paths will be lit by courage and confidence, trust and camaraderie, wisdom.

My friends, I offer you my warmest congratulations.

References

1. Australian Dictionary of Biography. <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090234b.htm>
2. Sir Keith Hancock: <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090234b.htm>