



Fiona Wood Public Lecture Series

Transcript for ‘Motivation – the secret ingredient in health?’ Presented by Professor Fiona Wood AM

Thank you so much for your beautiful Welcome to Country and very kind introduction. It's great that you are all here to give me the opportunity of sharing some of my ideas and experiences with you so that hopefully we will grow together and make tomorrow better.

As I am thinking about what it is I want to share this evening I will give you a bit of background into how this came about.

Certainly as Fiona Stanley became established I felt very strongly, coming from Royal Perth Hospital, I started at Royal Perth Hospital in 1989, the Burns unit came here and we moved into a Burns unit the likes of which I have not seen around the world. It is exceptional. There may be one or two that are as good as from an environmental point of view but with that team, we are hitting pretty high on the ladder. And so we were in an extraordinary environment. An environment to be able practice your craft, because of your education and training, in an environment that is one of the best in the world is special. And I wanted to share that, way beyond the four walls, I wanted people out there to know that when we come to work here it is something to be proud of and so we want to all be proud of this together.

Our health system, I think, is one of the best in the world. We could all do better, absolutely, and we will come back to how when we have challenges to do or jobs to do at the end as it were and when you all ask me awkward questions on how do we do this. But the point of fact is that we are very privileged. We live in an amazing place, an amazing part of the world, and with amazing opportunities and so with that as our starting point, and then I bring to the table a level of obligation, a level of responsibility to actually do the best you can in that environment.

And so I said to myself we have got to bring our community in here. We have got to show everybody what is happening because there is so much more happening than you might see on the front of the West, funnily enough! And so it is like one of those things, “Be careful what you wish for,” because now here we have, the Fiona Wood Lecture series.

As I do hope the word will spread and that we will be able, over the coming months, and years, hopefully, to really reach out to our community and say this is what is happening here. This is how you can be part of what is happening and this is how collectively we can have a health a system that is actually one that is the envy of the world.

Because I am a great believer in dreaming. And if you don't dream, however are you going to be better tomorrow? So I thought, really, again Bridget put me under the pump and said, "Well, what are you going to talk about," and I thought, "Well, I don't know". You know me, I will talk to anybody you know. Lock the doors; you will all be turning to dust before you get out of here. And so, what is it that I can share with you, and I started thinking about this whole motivation, inspiration and things that we talk about and how to make it real. How do we tell the stories to make them real?

Over the last few years, maybe it has been a bit longer now, I have had the opportunity to tell my personal story in many ways, in different forums; and each time I do so I learn something else about myself. And so I thought I would tell you some of my personal story but how it relates to that whole concept of getting up in the morning to bring your 'A' game to the table.

As you know, I'm a surgeon. As a surgeon, we really have an extraordinary relationships with people that seek our help. I see people whose lives have changed in an instant. They come because they are suffering, they have had a trauma, there's a problem. And they sign a consent form. This is a little bit of a hot topic around here at the moment because we are trying to make this consent process more meaningful, more appropriate and a form that we can find later so that we know we have done it – just putting that to one side. Anyway, there we are, they have signed the consent form and that responsibility for the surgeon, the team around to look after you when you are ultimately vulnerable. You're asleep, you are under anaesthetic, you will wake up because we have extraordinary teams of anaesthetists that will facilitate that. You will wake up with all this modern pain medicine and all sorts of things.

I recently had my knees replaced. I thought it was a good idea at the time to have them both done together, I thought yeah, I will go big. I was sitting on the edge of the bed talking to the anaesthetist who lifted my hand and before he had even finished, because I was sitting up with a pillow on my lap, because I was going to have a spinal anaesthetic so that the general anaesthetic could be lighter so that I could wake up with less vomiting, wake up with tubes into my legs so that I didn't feel my knees. The last thing I know, he said "Hello" and then I wake up and I have got spaghetti everywhere. But no pain, and I was able to walk day one, that evening.

Now that sort of technology, and that trust, those relationships is something that – I am really getting old right. I may not be bionic, but I am getting old.

I have never worked in anything other than health, and yet I still marvel at that whole process. It is something that is special. It is something that we can never take for granted. It is something that we have to respect in a way that it is unique I think, it is a unique situation.

So how did I get here? What motivated me to be a surgeon? So I stand back, I look back through the tunnel of time, and you know it has been a bit grey here today but nothing like the place I grew up. I grew up in a Yorkshire mining village; it was sunny for a couple of days. In fact, my son was over there with my mum a few weeks ago and he rang up and he says, "Grandma's having a heatwave so I've taken all her jumpers and I've put them all on myself." And he said, "They've got bushfires here, Mum" and he showed me a photograph on the front of the newspaper with one squaddie, one soldier, with a hosepipe.

It's a very different place, and that's where I came from. I came from a Yorkshire mining village, and I was very fortunate because I think inspiration comes from many sources and I have been very fortunate because first cab off the rank for me was my parents. They left school at 13 and 14 and they were focussed on education. With education you will get up in the morning and enjoy what you do. We have an education and training system that gives us that opportunity to get up in the morning and find what it is that we want to share, what it is that we want to do. And to take pleasure in that, to take pride in it. As I have said, we should take pride in a place like this where you work. And so that's where I actually came from and I went to medical school on the back of a life-changing event for me.

I was going to school in the public system and I was destined to leave school at the end of year 10. My mother thought that that was not on and so she wrote to the then Education Minister, because, you know, there's no point messing about going up the chain. There's a few people round here who realise that is where I caught it from. Anyway, she wrote to the Education Minister. She had this letter for many years, and it said, "Don't worry, your daughters not university material but I am sure she is a very good person." And my mother was like, "Right, we'll see about that!"

And so, we were in, I don't know if any of you know Yorkshire? There's the Doncaster/Wakefield Road. Doncaster for horse races, Wakefield Trinity for Rugby League, yeah. That's about it, and lots of mines in between. So, along the Doncaster / Wakefield Road there's all these villages, and I lived in the village of Upton, the next village along was called Ackworth. In Ackworth they had a school that was run by the Society of Friends – it was run by the Quakers. And it had been a school since the 1700s, initially as a foundling hospital but then taken over by the Quakers and it was a co-ed school. Very unusual, very progressive, obviously in the 1700s, and it had retained that progressive edge of Quaker foundation in education.

The kids used to look so cool; the uniform was navy skirts with blue and white striped shirts and the girls had cloaks with Harry Potter style pale blue lining in the hood, all the way down to the floor.

I thought, “Oh, mum, I would love to go there” – it’s actually the eighth most expensive school in England. So Mum, there she is “Right, there’s a job, I’ve seen a job advertised, it’s a house mother. I can do that – I’ve got four kids, I’m a mother, I’m in business! I live in a house, I can do this.” So off she went to have an interview at the school and two hours later she came out – the Phys Ed teacher. As such I got to go to the school for thirty pounds, and I thought that was such a lot of money. That my Mum and Dad were actually sacrificing 30 pounds to go to school. It was a life changer for me.

I walked into school that first morning, with my Harry Potter cloak on, feeling cool. That first morning, my Mum grabbed me by the shoulders, looked me in the eyes and said, “Grasp the nettle, Fiona, with both hands, and never let it go.” Some days it’s pretty hard to hold on, as I will come to. Some days you need the help of those around you because it hurts to hold on, but my goodness, when those opportunities come by, there is no question that in life there’s only one thing to do - hold on.

Another small story from my childhood such that you understand that motivation was kind of a little bit genetic. My father was in a stag night. Now this was a very unusual bucks night, stag night in that it was being funded by a Canadian film crew. Now I was about six at the time and we lived in a two-up, two-down terrace house near the pit head and this knock on the door came and a Canadian film producer (ten a penny in a mining village in Yorkshire– “You’re a what???”) with the film crew. And he said we want to make a documentary, it is called *Wedding on a Saturday*. My mum helped with the Youth Club and so off they went and they figured out how they could do this documentary. Part of it was the bucks night and there was my Dad, swaying. I don’t know what happened to me, because I am really short. All the rest of my family are really quite big, and my Dad was called big Geoff, and with very good reason. It wasn’t ironic at all, he was enormous, a very big man, strong guy, he was in European coal filling championship team. Now do you really have a team who can shovel coal more than anyone else? But anyway, there it goes. So there’s Dad and he’s swaying in the breeze and he said, “I won’t be satisfied until I see one of my boys in light blue and one in pale blue going under Putney bridge in the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. And he went off, “Who are you to say that your kids can go to Oxford and Cambridge, the best universities in the world”. His response was, “Who am I not to dream”. Who am I not to dream? Who are any of us not to dream? If we don’t dream we are limited only by our imagination. However we are going to imagine what tomorrow will bring. However are we going to drive those dreams and into tomorrow.

So I came from that kind of upbringing – that belief in yourself was fundamental but the belief that there is one question. You've got these opportunities that you hang on, that you dream, and dream big. But you've got to have your feet on the ground, and there's one question. Are you prepared to work hard enough to realise that?

There is no substitute for hard work. That four letter word was quite challenging in my house when I one point I had six teenagers. I had six children, four boys, two girls. I didn't plan that, but they were all teenagers together and the whole concept of the joy of a job well done, work for work's sake was a little heavy sell at that time.

I try to put that into context because that's how I went and I arrived in London in 1975; in bright yellow linen pants, ready to make a splash. So there I am going to medical school. I guess also, we had done a lot of sport as kids. That was pushed pretty heavily by my mum and dad and so I got very competitive and I wanted to be the first woman in space but some Russian chick did it so I had to go into something else. Science and physics were my passion and then my brother took me to London. He was already a medical student, some of you may know him, he is Professor David Wood, an orthopaedic surgeon at Hollywood. He is just retiring, he says, I think he is just redeploying, but anyway. He took me to London for a weekend and said, "I think you should come to med school with me".

Sport played a big part in my selection into medical school, because there I was. I was 16 and I had been accelerated through school. I went into my University entrance interview in St Thomas' Hospital Medical School, it is right next to the Houses of Parliament on the River Thames. It is as posh as and we were like kids from Yorkshire, it was really funny. I go in and they say, "Is there anybody in your family in medicine?", and I thought, "Mmm – oo ouch, this is a bit dodgy" and then I remembered there was my brother, yes. But I didn't have to say anything because the Professor of Anatomy leant forward to the Dean of the Medical School and said, "This is David's sister, did you see the try he scored on Saturday?" So there I was, my whole medical school interview was about rugby. It was a particularly good try, so I am going to bore you with it now. He was playing for Saracens which is one of the big London clubs. He played for St Thomas' he was the captain of the United London Hospitals, he played for England under 23s and all this sort of stuff, but his club was Saracens. They were playing Pontypool, and Pontypool had the Welsh front row, and they were Faulkner, Price and Windsor. I even remember their names. It was when the Welsh were like the All Blacks. These Welsh come from the valleys, they get off the train in London and they are ready to knock the --- knock our boys around, right. There's my brother, he was 19, 6'4", and he peeled off the back of the line out, it was rugby union. Pontypool won the ball clean, he intercepted, got the ball and sprinted for the line, knees up and he dived over.

On the back of the Sunday Telegraph the next day, “Wood crashes over the tri-line draped in Welsh men”, and they won the game. It was the winning try. My Dad kept that in his wallet until it turned into dust. So that was it; that was my medical school interview – because it was a seriously good try. I didn’t like to point out that I wouldn’t actually be playing but there it was, and as we came out, such was the times, that they said to my brother who was waiting for me outside. “Don’t worry, she will be alright”.

Not many months later I was at St Thomas Hospital Medical School, wearing my bright yellow linen pants. There I was, and I went into the anatomy demonstration room, where people are so generous, they had given their bodies such that students like myself could learn the science and the art of anatomy. I still remember dissecting the forearm and looking at how everything fits. If you look, it all fits, its exquisite. We are all the same on the inside, I know, I have been there often enough now, and the human body is so incredible. I thought, wow, if surgeons put this back together, that’s what I want to be. I will be a surgeon. I have the insight of a gnat, I had been there less than a day, but I was overwhelmed by the – I guess the beauty of it to be kind of blunt about it. But I have always felt that I was very fortunate that I became so passionate about something, because I think if you find your passion there are so many things that will fall into place. Not forgetting that hard work. And so then it was a question of how to do it.

I was one of twelve women in my year and people said you can’t do that because women don’t do surgery. So my standard answer became, “Well, I am really good at embroidery – does it help?” and I walked on by. Especially the young guys here today, if somebody says, “You can’t do that,” without engaging or solving your problem or wanting to help you to do something better, walk on by – don’t waste your precious breath or your precious time. There are so many more people out there that are ready to engage and share their energy with you to work out a solution, so many more. I learnt really early that I wasn’t going to change their minds and what somebody thinks about you is none of your business – walk on by. Because I have a fundamental belief that everybody is unique and special, everybody has a gift to give.

How often, if you think about it or look around have you done something less than your best so that you didn’t embarrass those around you; and how often have you seen someone do something absolutely amazing and then really got behind them. I think we really need to think about two things – how we put our gift on the table, how get the courage to share that gift. This is what I would like to do, this is what I think I could contribute. And if we think about that in the context of we all facilitate in each other then those personal gifts would be much more available, because people would be more comfortable sharing. Does that make sense?

So I think that is something that I really started thinking about increasingly as I have been through the journey I have to this point and as Robyn said, we were beavering away, at Royal Perth and PMH, beavering away in our team. Understanding that through research, which I started as a medical student because I had to have a CV that was better than my mates, I had to have a CV that people wouldn't walk by. And I started what suited my personality I am a why kind of person – “Here she goes again” – “Why?” – but I want to know why, I want to know things. I want to know things that will help reduce the suffering for the people that we see.

That's what motivates me, and it still does. So why has it been maintained over 30 years? It has been maintained over 30 years because of people around me. As I said, I was very fortunate in that I had inspiration right early with the first cab off the rank with my mum and dad. But then I met teachers. We are all teachers, some formal, some informal, but point of fact is that we all teach. Every day we share things and we guide, or not, as we bumble along through life; and we all have formal teachers in our schooling. I had an extraordinary experience last year, unfortunately just before my physics teacher died. He was 96 and he asked me, “What's new, Fiona – what's new that I might be interested in?” And there we were sitting; often when I go home I often have my mum's mates around for an afternoon tea, because my mum likes to show me off. It's like, it's alright Mum, it's a lot easier if we get everybody here together and then we drive them all home because there's a few Zimmer frames involved, and a people are not going to drive after a few glasses of red. So we all get together and he asked me, “What is that I would be really excited by?”

I think this is related to this young man here (points to poster) this kid here is a kid named James Anderson, and I know him. He went to John XXIII a couple of years in front of my kids. His brother was in one of my kid's year. He came to me and asked if he could do work experience. I said, “Yeah, come along”. The next time I saw him he was a medical student, and then the next time I see him he wants to do a B.Med Science, he wants to do a year of research – free manpower, yeah, right, come on in!

So I got a real desire to understand why the skin is a great big receptor. We know that the eye sees light, the tongue tastes, the hearing hears. We have that. But the skin is so much more complicated. It does so many more things. It is our interface with the world and it is very, very intimately connected with the brain. My first paper I ever wrote in 1986 was related to how the nerves changed in the skin when you expanded it by putting a balloon underneath the normal skin and slowly blew it up over three months. And we were told at the time that the nerves would spread apart and it wouldn't feel the same. But I know that it did because I tested my two point discrimination on my tummy that went up and down six times, and I knew that wasn't true.

So I did an experiment on tissue expansion, and I knew that the nerves in the skin were plastic. We now know that the brain is plastic. The book, 'The brain that changes itself'. If you have an amputation and have phantom limb pain, when you scan the brain that limb pain is over-represented here on the brain. Burns damages the nerves of the skin, so what's happening? This young fellow spent a year and we took burns that were at least a year old, where the scars were mature and we measured the sensation. And say the burn is here (points to hand), the sensation was significantly reduced compared to the equivalent non-burnt side.

The hypothesis, the reason that we put forward for this happening before we did the work was that the density of the nerves here would be less than over here, right? It made sense. I went in and he had spent a year looking down a microscope counting the nerves, which is just a bit kind of mind numbing, and he had done all his analysis and I thought he was ready to cry. I said, "What's the matter?" and he said, "The nerve density is the same", he said, "but it's really strange because, I don't know if it's wrong but in the people that have 80 per cent of their body burnt the nerve density is the same in the burnt area and the non-burnt, but it is a lot less in the people who have been burnt less."

At this point I was running around the room doing back flips. Because if you are burnt here your nerves change here, and now we know that your spinal cord changes and your brain changes here because we have had students over the years looking at this, looking at mapping the brain. And if that changes, when we get to the brain mapping, we did trans cranial magnetic stimulation to map the burnt area relative to the hand, because the hand is the easiest bit for them to map and before we did it in our patients, they did it in me. So I have got my hand all wired up and I have got this magnet on my head and they are turning the dial up and my hand isn't moving. And they are all going, "Ooh, um," and they kept turning the dial up and my face is going crazy because on the map, my face is next to your hand and the day before I had had a tooth out. The pain had swamped the whole side of my brain. The plasticity.

So the discussion I had with my physics teacher was if you are injured here and your sensation changes what else is changing in the function of the skin. Your capacity to regulate your temperature, your capacity to sweat, your capacity to function your immune system – the first line of defence, etcetera etcetera. That's one thing but what about over here, because your nerves have changed over here and your brain has changed. Therefore if we understood that could we stimulate our brain, could we think ourselves whole? At one point in time maybe in this lecture theatre before they have pulled this place down and actually build the new hospital they will have done that, in fifty years' time. Maybe they will have an understanding on how you can use the power of the brain to change the capacity to heal. And then I wake up.

But it is the dreams that started it along this path. The people here who know or have been part of this journey and unless we dream we will never start this. And there I was having this extraordinary opportunity to discuss that, and have to answer some pretty tough questions, I must say with my physics teacher at high school who was now 96. That is very special in my memory box.

Another I guess, special time in my memory box that is hard to talk about is 2002. I think, over the years those of us who work in an environment where we see things, a little too often that no one should see, and that trauma builds. For me what I managed at the time to deal with in what I thought I was a kind of straight down the line kind of way has kind of caught up with me a little. But I will share some of that time with you because I think again it puts the motivation in context. The motivation to keep going.

We were busy at Royal Perth in that week in October. We had Vijay, our registrar, and his wife Praya who was an anaesthetic registrar and we had been busy working away. They went on holiday on the Saturday and so by Sunday we had some very solid intelligence, we knew exactly what was happening in Sanglah Hospital. We knew what had happened on the ground and we knew that we needed a significant evacuation of significant injury, people who had been significantly injured.

I think the story of this again is a story of the West Australian community because it goes back way before that day. It goes back to 1989, I was a Registrar at Royal Perth, I got a call from Kununurra about a burn. I waited a day, did my jobs, came back and said when is this patient arriving? Tomorrow – I said “What are they doing, coming by camel?” and they said, “Funny you should say that.” “What?” I had never accepted a patient to London, where I had come from, from North Africa, which is the equivalent distance.

As we went to 1991, we fast forward a little bit, I had a very clear understanding that every intervention from the point of injury will affect the scar wall for life. By 1994 we were teaching everywhere around the state burns management first aid. Into the community, into the health systems all around the state and we do that and have now done so for the past 20 years, at least 5 trips a year. A team from the Burns Service of WA will go and will teach from Kununurra to Albany to Esperance to Broome and everywhere in between. Because when you see that person in front of you, you are part of our burns team and we are only a phone call away, you know what to do and we know that as a result that our patients come in in the very best condition they could.

We were then approached by Woodside Petroleum as they were bringing online the North West Gas Shelf. They asked if we could develop a disaster plan as the North Rankin A oil platform is the same as Piper Alpha.

Piper Alpha was the biggest loss of life to a burn injury until the London bombing, and that was off Aberdeen in the 1980s. And so we worked with Woodside, they funded our physio Dale Edgar to take a block of time to work out a very rigorous disaster plan and linked with the whole of Australia and New Zealand and from this we did an exercise called exercise Icarus where we taught everybody in the north west and we flew up there. We flew helicopters across to the oil rig. We worked out how we could treat people best, how we could get them best into the proper care at the right time. Right treatment, right place, right time. Then we sent all the recommendations to the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council in July of 2002. A lot of work over a long period of time based on the understanding that maybe one burn in rural WA is a disaster.

By that time we had had some significant events that had really stretched us. In August we got a letter saying all of those recommendations had been approved and we were in a position to do some education across the country to upskill people and roll it all out. But it just hadn't really got off the blocks before we did it for real. But we were able to respond in that October because of the community of WA that had facilitated this whole planning process that drove the plan across from the Commonwealth Government because at that time the most well developed plan was actually the trauma plan from the Burns Service of WA. Now there is an overarching trauma plan whether there is an Australian or an overseas trauma and there are pillars underneath and we have a much greater understanding, whether is a tsunami or an earthquake or an explosion, and so we have an appropriate response with respect to the teams that we send. All that is in place now but then it wasn't. It was the burns plan paid for by Woodside. But it was an opportunity to show that we could work together across the country and in fact it was extraordinary.

We had 28 patients here in WA. We had teams at the airport triaging; walking wounded went to Charlies and Fremantle. All burns patients came to us at Royal Perth. We commandeered half of intensive care, we quarantined all the patients from Bali away from everyone else from an infection control point of view. We had all sorts of processes in place and I remember sitting in the board room on the Monday when we knew we had 28 patients and a full burns unit and we wouldn't turn anyone away unless we couldn't do the job and the challenge I put to everybody that day was – we need to be able to do this as if each one of these young men (because it was predominantly young sportsmen) was here as an individual. And if we can't do that, we have to work out why, and solve the problem. One of the nurses in charge of theatres stood up and Carmel said, "Well that's it. We have got a very clear directive, we will meet back here in three hours and if we have any remaining problems we will sort them. From stores to allied health, to nursing, to theatres, ICU, anaesthetics – we have got three hours to facilitate this."

We started on Wednesday and our goal was to remove all the burn by the maximum of seven days. We started on Wednesday and we got massive teams rotating through to maintain the freshness. Big teams not just from Royal Perth, from across the city and we had finished by Sunday, including those that were just coming along for the ride because they just happened to be burnt at the same time.

There were things that happened at that time again that I learnt a lot about myself. I went home and there was a chicken casserole that had been made by one of my friends for my children and I rang her up and said, "My kids are fine, you don't need to worry about them," and she said, "What makes you so selfish?" She never has been backwards at coming forwards and I said, "What do you mean," and she said, "We are doing what we wanna do." The mums at school did all sorts of things, amazing stuff. But lots of people did lots of things for people they didn't know and so she said, "We are doing what we want to do, you do what you do so get back in your box and do it." Ok, no worries. But it was a really good lesson for me, it's not weakness to ask for help, we are all in this together.

At three weeks we had people go home, to Germany, New Zealand, all over the place. Our West Australians came home to us and one of my mates, Ian Gollow, he's the paediatric surgeon said, "We have witnessed something extraordinary. We have seen people motivated in a way that I have never seen before." Whether it be in the community, the hospital, everywhere. People had put themselves out for people they didn't know to reduce the suffering. Families that came over from Sydney, foster their children, there they were with their child here.

It was extraordinary and it changed me, changed me for life. Why do we have to wait – sorry, as I say it is much harder for me to deal with this now – why do we have to wait for something so profoundly negative to make us motivated to do our best? Where is that human spirit? Where is that kindness, that respect, that integrity? It is there, I know, all the time. What makes us shy of sharing it? What makes us shy to not share what is the best of us?

And so I have changed, I look for good news stories in any way I can find it and I shout it from the rooftops. Good news stories are really, really what matters. Oh, we can say to the media, "Oh the media is all negative here," but we read it, we listen to it. We need to drive good news stories.

Another one from my memory box and I will tell you two more stories before you can ask me all sorts of different questions is Cathy Freeman. I was there when she won the 400 metres at the Olympic Games in Sydney. I was there with three of my kids, that was an interesting challenge. Fortunately in the ballot we got four tickets for the 1500 metre swim and four tickets for the 400 metre final and so we had to draw straws and I was there with three of my kids.

It was magical, it is beyond description, the crowd was crazy and the guy was going, “Be quiet for the start, please,” and nobody listened, right. They are going nuts and he is going, “Be quiet,” and he’s going hoarse, and eventually he got the crowd and when there is that many people silent you can feel it, can’t you. And then the gun went and off she went and the crowds crackers and she’s coming down the back straight and there’s no way she will say, “Oh, I’m sorry, I don’t want to embarrass you, every other country can go in front of me,” and there’s no way we are going to say, “Oh Cathy, slow down a bit, you’re upsetting everyone.” We were going for it – for Australia, for her, for her family, for her people, for all of us. There was not a dry eye in the house when there was that national anthem and the flags, I don’t care what anyone says, to be there is one of my memory box moments.

We have all got a gift, we can all share it. We need to find out what that gift is.

In 2005 I had an extraordinary opportunity to be Australian of the Year. I have not got the words to describe what that was like, I just can’t. Again it’s one of those things that’s hard for me to talk about. I was asked two questions I will share with you. One was, “You are Australian, aren’t you?” Oh, yeah. “Nah, does it matter?” in my best Yorkshire accent. The other was, what is it I would like to share with Australia. Well, I will tell you because it is as relevant today as it was back then.

Each and every one of us is responsible for the decisions that we make. They have a profound effect on us personally, the decisions we make about our health, our wellness, our education. We are in an extraordinary place. We have a world-class facility, we have world-class folks. We just need all of us to move together, to be motivated to deliver world-class care because clinical excellence is what we all deserve. Clinical excellence to me is seeing the person I love the most treated the best in the world. Anything less, then let’s take three hours and work it out and come back to the table. Because the decisions you make personally not only affect you, they affect our whole community.

So I want us to work together to be motivated to share our energy, to find those gifts, to facilitate the gifts in each and every one of us to work towards a society dependant on the integrity of each and every one of us, not the intellect of a few, but we are all in this together.

My goodness, it is exciting. Thank you very much

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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