



Director's Christmas 2014 message to Centrecare staff

"Good morning,

It's always a pleasure to see so many Centrecare people together. To share one another's company, celebrating a special occasion. We recently had a similar experience at the 25th Anniversary of Centrecare Goldfields.

It's good to reflect on what it is about being together and sharing events such as these whether with work colleagues, friends or family that makes them so meaningful and why we look forward to them so much. It is also significant that we miss togetherness when it isn't there. When people that care for each other are separated whether for work, family or other reasons there is a sense that something is missing. We hunger to once again be together and share each other's company.

The former UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, once said that there was no such thing as society but only individuals. This idea of individualism that is so prevalent in our society can often be interpreted and expressed as separateness. It can become a philosophy of everyone for herself or himself. A belief that there is responsibility only for one self and a lack of care of others. In this world view, success is about personal comfort and satisfaction with no commitment to the wellbeing of others. It can turn into one-upmanship with no sense of the importance of collaborating for a common, altruistic purpose.

However, everyone in this room shares a different vision of community and society. Centrecare's work, in which you share so intimately, is about a society that seeks not just one's own wellbeing but also the wellbeing of others. It dares to believe that we are not self-centred automatons with no sense of otherness. We believe that altruism has value and that self-sacrifice for the betterment of others is still relevant. The recent events in Sydney shows that this view of the world is still alive and well. Tori Johnson is reported to have tried to disarm the hostage taker and died in the process. His death is a very poignant example of caring for others even at the expense of one's own life. Your work is a daily reminder to our community that there are people who genuinely care for others not out of self-interest but out of belief that each person is important and that everyone has value. Soon you will see the many ways in which you as individuals as well as a collective have contributed to the community in which we live. Your work and you as people are an inspiration to many.

Christmas is a time of togetherness and celebration. In its essence the Christian story of Christ's birth is a call to peace and goodwill among people. It is a time to share, hence the presents (which can get out of control) but more importantly it's about sharing time with one another. It is an opportunity to remember how important relationships are in our lives, even if they can create pain as much as joy. It's a reminder that we live not in a world of separateness but of interconnectedness. As the poet John Donne wrote long ago

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main...



Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind...

It's this connectedness that is in this room and it's something very special and well worth celebrating. Relationships are the essence of life as they allow us the opportunity to touch the divine in others as well as ourselves. So, let's enjoy our time together its very precious.

Thank you for all the work you do for the people you see on a daily basis and my sincere best wishes for a wonderful Christmas to you and your loved ones."

Tony Pietropiccolo AM
Director