

Media Release

11 November, 2016

The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation Raise Record \$750,000

Event Highlights

Event name: Royal Hospital for Women 150th Gala Dinner Celebration

Location: The Westin Hotel Sydney on 10 November, 2016.

- **Indigenous Opera Singer Deborah Cheetham joined on stage with electric guitarist Peter Northcote and SCEGGs choir**
- **Panel discussion titled 'Motherhood: The Future' with social demographer Mark McCrindle, television personality Annabel Crabb, author Kathy Lette, newly announced executive director of RAMS Ainslie van Onselen, PwC Australia chairman Mark Haberlin and Head of the forthcoming Fertility and Research Centre, Prof William Ledger.**
- **Patients share lifesaving stories.**
- **Rebekah Giles, Tsunami survivor, announced as Fertility and Research Centre Ambassador.**

The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation celebrated 150 years of caring for women and babies with a record fundraising event.

The evening brought together politicians, the corporate elite, hospital staff, former patients and television personalities Ben Fordham, Annabel Crabb and Kathy Lette.

Celebrated with a performance by Indigenous opera singer Deborah Cheetham, an entertaining panel discussion examining the future of motherhood and emotional thank you speeches from patients who had their life, or their baby's life, saved by The Royal.

The night commenced with an announcement that the Hon Jillian Skinner was donating \$100,000 on behalf of the NSW Government.

Patients and their families also took to the stage to give their thanks. "When you donate you don't just save babies lives, you save mums, you save dads, you save families" said one grateful father Johnathan whose son Nathaniel had been in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit, for several months when he was born severely premature with complications. They described learning that 70% of the life-saving machines that kept their son breathing were purchased throughout donated funds.

Following the patient stories, the panelists took to the stage to share their views on how to make motherhood more achievable as they acknowledged Australia's declining birth rate and the challenges that come with Australia's high cost of living.

UNSW fertility expert, Professor William Ledger spoke about women delaying pregnancy until they are in their forties or in some case fifties and often coming to see him for fertility assistance when they have left it too late because they are "mislead by celebrities who have children later. It is possible for a woman to carry a baby in their fifties but she would usually do it with donated eggs," as he explained fertility typically declines at 35 years for women.

Every day at The Royal, a baby's life begins, a baby's life is saved, a woman's life is saved and new research creates miracles.

Comedy author Kathy Lette described “childbirth as doddle compared to what comes next. I thought I would have a family who made the Waltons look depressed. Nobody told me about the cracked nipples, constipation, mastitis, hemorrhoids – Edmund Hilary couldn’t scale those bastards. And yet you can’t escape.”

“Hubby can nip off down the pub, but as a woman you’re a 24-hour catering service – Meals on Heels. Then there’s the Sleep deprivation – and the sex deprivation. ‘Cause kids are a contraceptive – every time you go to make love the baby wakes up or the toddler toddles in. I do have one great sex tip for parents - Vaseline on the doorknobs. Sounds painful but they can’t get in!”

Annabel Crabb spoke about her live-in au pair making motherhood more possible to balance with work, but agreed ultimately women and men need to balance parenting. Her advice to her 20 year-old self on the subject of fertility was “choose the right partner and count your eggs” which, she added she was happy she had done.

Mark McCrindle reflected on how far society has progressed comparing tablets of today (E.g. iPads) with the tablets 150 years ago showing a slide of a tablet tin containing eucalyptus and cocaine tablets, as he joked “they recommend just one per day” comparing it to today’s technology and well informed medical opinions.

The event’s fundraising will enable the Hospital to provide services for Malabar Midwives- a program that offers culturally appropriate health care to indigenous patients, as well as the opening of Australia’s first public comprehensive, holistic Fertility and Research Centre in Australia, and vital life-saving equipment for the Newborn Intensive Care Unit.

The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation CEO Catherine Oates-Smith reflected that the hospital was born with a soul. In 1866, The Royal was founded on the belief that all women deserved access to non-judgemental maternity care. Over 60% of our patients were young European refugees shunned by society for being unmarried and pregnant.

Despite criticism, The Royal treated these women with dignity. It was a first in a series of groundbreaking moments at The Royal. CEO Catherine Oats Smith says “tonight was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on how many lives have been saved at The Royal over the past 150 years. More lives in the future will be saved because of the three quarters of a million dollars that has been raised tonight. I am so grateful to all our supporters. I am so touched by the generosity of all of those who have donated.”

- ENDS

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Timeline of the past 150 years:

1821: the Benevolent Society open the Benevolent Asylum in Pitt Street providing care for underprivileged women and laying the foundations for what will later become The Royal Hospital for Women.

1866: the Asylum becomes known as the Lying-In Hospital after Dr. Arthur Renwick opens a Lying-In ward exclusively for maternity care.

1901: the Lying-In Hospital moves to Paddington.

1904: in October King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra confer the Royal warrant and the Hospital officially becomes The Royal Hospital for Women.

1912: the first antenatal clinic in Australia is opened at The Royal. This clinic is now the longest running antenatal clinic in the world.

1926: Dr. Margaret Harper opens a premature nursery, halving the neonatal death rate.

1943: Australia's first female and male fertility clinic opened (known then as the sterility clinic).

1949: Australia's first gynaecological cancer detection clinic is opened at The Royal.

1950: the 100,000th baby is born at the Hospital.

1962: Australia's first diagnostic ultrasound service is established.

1970: the world's first cardiac ultrasound of a baby in utero is performed at The Royal

1974: the world's first cranial ultrasound of a baby in utero is performed at The Royal.

1978: Australia's first menopause clinic is opened.

1983: one of the first birth centres in Australia is opened at The Royal

1985: the world's first in utero procedure to save a baby's life is performed at The Royal.

1989: Australia's first comprehensive Gynaecological Oncology Unit is opened.

1992: the Eastern Sydney Area Health Service takes over management of The Royal Hospital for Women from the Benevolent Society.

1997: on the 23rd of June, The Royal moves from Paddington to Randwick to be co-located with the Sydney Children's Hospital and the Prince of Wales Hospital.

2000: Mothersafe is established and run from at The Royal.

2002: the 300,000th baby is born at The Royal.

2006: the Malabar Midwives service established.

2010: Midwifery Group Practice commences, The Royal now has one of the largest caseload midwifery services in the world.

2016: the building of Australia's first comprehensive public, holistic Fertility and Research Centre, begins in December to be opened in 2017.

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Every day at The Royal, a **baby's** life begins, a **baby's** life is saved, a woman's life is saved and new **research** creates **miracles**.

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– ENDS –

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