Ladies and gentlemen, as Administrator of the Northern Territory and proud Patron of Australian Red Cross, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Government House this evening.

Thank you Nadine for your welcome to country. I acknowledge the Larrakia people, traditional custodians of the land on which this historic house stands.

It is a privilege to be able to celebrate such a significant milestone with you all. To think, 100 years today the wonderful humanitarian work of Red Cross in Australia began.

This, the centenary of Red Cross, is a great Australian story. It is a story about the extraordinary generosity and compassion of everyday people who selflessly offer a helping hand to others.

In 100 years it is not surprising that Red Cross has a remarkable history. The Australian Red Cross was formed just nine days after the outbreak of World War One by Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson,
the wife of the then Governor-General. She began the Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society, calling on the wives of State Governors to form State committees.

Red Cross Northern Territory Division was established in May 1915, and included fundraising events that raised over thirteen thousand pounds for British Red Cross. This was no small achievement.

Although initially bringing assistance to those wounded on the battlefield, the work of Red Cross grew to include general disaster relief and support services. In 1927 it was formally recognised as a National Society and in nineteen twenty-nine, the Blood Transfusion Service was first set up in Victoria.

During World War Two Red Cross became the largest charitable organisation in Australia. From a population of seven million, nearly half a million people were Red Cross members—mostly women. This was a very busy time for Red Cross in Darwin and included the devastation of the Bombing of Darwin. Members and volunteers played a key role, working tirelessly to raise funds, provide supplies and food parcels. They also assisted the wounded.

Post war, Red Cross continued to develop services for hospitals and conducted fundraising for local and international relief
efforts. During the Vietnam War, support was provided to both soldiers and civilians.

Over the years, charitable contributions to the community grew to include a lot at the local level. In the 1960’s Red Cross supported migrants to the Northern Territory with clothing and essentials. They also opened a shop on Cavenagh Street for welfare and sale of handicrafts, and began Emergency Housekeeping and transport for convalescent patients. In 1967 the new headquarters and Blood Transfusion Service officially opened on Lambell Terrace.

In 1974, when cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin, most of the population found themselves homeless. Red Cross volunteers were mobilised across Australia to assist in the biggest relief operation in Australian history. From providing emergency supplies, to recording names of victims and fundraising across Australia, Red Cross came together in support of Darwin.

The 1970’s and 80’s saw the commencement of a number of services including Meals on Wheels, Home Help, the SHAK Youth Centre and Tracing to reunite Timorese and Vietnamese families. During the 1990’s the Hospital Trolley, Kiosk and Library Service, as well as Op Shops, with a new one in Palmerston, provided invaluable services to the community.
The late 1990’s and 2000’s have seen Red Cross take a lead role in disaster relief and support, raising funds and providing assistance after Katherine’s Australia Day flood, the Bali bombings, the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Black Saturday bushfires. Red Cross helped raise more than three hundred and seventy-nine million dollars for the Victorian Bushfire Appeal in 2009, sending more than one thousand volunteers and staff to affected areas.

The history of Red Cross does not end there. It is through the continued support of caring Australians, like you here today, that the essential work of Red Cross can extend into the future: helping people in crisis, strengthening communities and changing lives for the better.

I now invite Sandra Cannon, Executive Director Northern Territory, to the lectern.