



Opening of New Identitywa Homes

Speech

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**Thursday 6 March 2025
Crawford Street, East Cannington**

Thank you, Graham, and thanks to all of you who have joined us here this morning for this very important event.

Graham has welcomed you all very warmly this morning and I do not want to repeat all those welcomes again, but I do simply want to say how glad I am to be here together with Graham Mander, Board Chair of identity WA with Marina Re the CEO, with other board members and staff, with the mayor of Canning Mr Patrick Hall and with all those who in so many different ways have contributed to bringing this project to fulfilment. I do in particular want to say how glad I am to be here with those who will be making these houses here in Crawford Street their home. For you especially this is a very important day - so welcome to you all.

Recently I was looking at the Identity WA website and I noticed that in the small section on the history of this organisation there was a phrase which noted that IdentityWA, when it first began, was “humble in size but big in vision”. In 1977, a small group of parents of children with disabilities gathered together to create an organisation called Catholic Care. It was seen as a self-help group which would provide support to parents as they navigated the challenges of caring for their children. Four years later, in 1981, the Catholic Church here in Perth, which had supported this group from its beginnings, welcomed Catholic Care as an official part of the Church’s life and ministry.

Twenty years later, in 2001, Catholic Care was given the new name IdentityWA. This means that this organisation, this agency of the Catholic Church, will be celebrating its golden Jubilee in just a few short years.

In its beginnings, what would eventually become IdentityWA may have been humble in size but as Graham has pointed out that is no longer the case although I hope it will always be humble in spirit. IdentityWA is now a very significant provider of disability services not just for Catholics, of course, but for everybody here in our part of the world who needs our help. But while the description “humble in size” no longer fits IdentityWA, “big in vision” certainly does.

Having a big vision, when it comes to making a real difference in people’s lives, means that you also have to have a large heart, and I would say that my experience of IdentityWA is that those who lead and those who support this agency are large-hearted people, people who understand that underneath and reaching beyond differences of culture, religion, political affiliation, and whatever skills and talents individuals may have, there lies the truth that every single human person, simply by virtue of his or her belonging to the human family, is equal



in dignity, equal in worth, and as we Christians would certainly say, equally loved and cherished by God.

This is certainly the vision which the present Pope, Pope Francis, places before our eyes, both in what he says and in what he does. He is, as most of you know, seriously ill in hospital. I am sure that many of you are keeping him in your prayers at this time. Once, in responding to a question from a journalist who asked him how he understood the Church, the Pope answered in this way:

“I like to think of the Church as being like a field hospital in the midst of a battle. When a wounded soldier is brought into the field hospital, the doctors and nurses do not first want to check his or her blood sugar levels or cholesterol levels. Rather they immediately try to tend to the person’s wounds. This is the most important thing, everything else can come later.”

To be a healer of wounds, said Pope Francis, is the vocation, the calling of the Church today and, he went on to say, not just a healer of wounds but a warmer of people’s hearts.

This is the big vision of IdentityWA: it seeks to be a healer of wounds and a warmer of the hearts of people who struggle with disability. And, of course, it seeks to do so with soothing words of comfort and encouragement but also and perhaps even more importantly through the practical offering of concrete assistance, the provision of beautiful and hospitable homes which are worthy of those who come to live in them, and a sensitive and focused attention on responding to individual needs, hopes and dreams.

It is by being faithful to this vision, captured so beautifully in Pope Francis’s description of the Church, and therefore of any agency which is a part of the life of the Church, as a place of hospitality and welcome where wounds can be healed, hearts can be warmed and hope can be in enkindled, that IdentityWA makes a real difference in the lives of so many people.

So thank you to everybody, without exception, who has had a role to play in bringing this wonderful project to conclusion. You are making a real difference, a powerful contribution, not just to those who will come to live here in Crawford Street but also to our society which has so much need of people of vision and large-heartedness who can inspire the same kind of response in all of us no matter what our personal circumstances and situations might be. Thank you for all that you do, and please keep on doing it: we need you.