

**HEADQUARTERS OFFICIAL LAUNCH  
23<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2002  
OPENING SPEECH BY DR LIZ PATTISON  
(ROTARY CLUB OF HEIRISSON)**

Today is a day for celebration. The opening of Headquarters is the culmination of five and a half years of hard work, and the start of a new era of opportunity for the young people of Perth.

Headquarters is at the leading edge - a first. There is no other facility like Headquarters. We're confident that Headquarters will become THE model for youth facilities, not only for Western Australia, but for Australia.

Headquarters is much more than this fantastic physical space. Headquarters is "By Young People, For Young People". It's about a place to belong, and a place to be yourself. It's about citizenship, leadership, youth development, volunteerism, a positive image of young people, and fun. It's music, art, skating, technology - and mentoring, training and development - all in one place. It's the most amazing example of volunteer effort. **It's a story of a vision so powerful that it was possible to overcome the most challenging set-backs.**

It's my privilege today to tell you the story of how Headquarters happened and what the future holds, and most importantly to recognise the many people and organisations that have made the dream come true.

The story of Headquarters began in 1996. Ian Matthews, now Headquarters Manager, was helping a group of skateboarders to form SKAWA (the Skateboarding Association of WA) and to find a place to skate. At the same time, Rotarian Les Cooper and myself became aware that skateboarders had no place to skate, were fined for skating in public, and moved on from place to place. I met with some skateboarders and Les and I began talking to Lotteries. The Rotary Club of Heirisson enthusiastically gave their support and created a Rotary project. It all came together on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 1996 when I was invited to a meeting of SKAWA, and there met Ian Matthews and a wonderful group of young people (many of whom are here today). The partnership was formed and we began looking for a site. From the start everyone told us that the scope had to be bigger than skateboarding and the vision began to form.

In late 1996 when Jack Marks was Mayor, the Council of the Town of Vincent formally agreed to help us find a site for a youth facility in the Perth CBD.

In early 1997 we met then City of Perth Councillor, Bill Sutton, who wanted to help. Through Bill a City of Perth Steering Committee was formed with representation from Town of Vincent, City of Perth, State Government, Youth Organisations, Rotary Club of Heirisson and SKAWA. Bob Kucera, now Minister for Health, was a member and played a key role in forming the concept of a youth facility with a wide range of activities and opportunities, as well as links to youth services. Other young people joined us. We were all filled with hope and optimism.

In the May school holidays of 1997, Lotteries and City of Perth funded our youth survey - the largest socio demographic analysis of young people in the City of Perth, carried out by young people as a street intercept survey. From this developed the Headquarters vision and business case. Lotteries saw the potential and have supported and believed in us throughout. Thank you.

During 1997 we knocked on many doors looking for a site, had many meetings with the City of Perth, Federal and State Ministers, government agencies and business leaders. We wrote briefing papers and submissions, and the Rotary Club of Heirisson put many hours into a potential site in Wellington Street. During this time we secured the bulk of our funding with \$412,000 from **each** of Lotteries and Department of Sport & Recreation. We also held a major Local Government Forum at Town of Vincent, which tackled insurance and legal issues in relation to skate parks, and led to both a package of designs and State Government funding being made available to every Local Council.

By early 1998, with many setbacks, we despaired of ever finding a site in the Perth CBD. So, in April 1998 Les Cooper, Ian Matthews and I met with Vern McKay, then a Director at Town of Vincent - bringing along the promise of the initial \$820,000 which we had secured in grants. Vern was inspired by our vision and embraced it. Just three weeks later in May 1998, with the support of John Giorgi, CEO, the Council of the Town of Vincent unanimously approved this site on a peppercorn lease to be developed into a youth facility. Thank you. From that day forward, every Headquarters request to Council has received unanimous approval from the Councillors of the Town of Vincent.

Headquarters was incorporated and the Board was formed, with initial representatives from Vincent, SKAWA, Rotary Club of Heirisson, Police, community members and other young people.

During 1998, 99 and 2000 we ran into difficulty after difficulty, but we never gave up. We were planning the buildings and skate park to go on this site, but the concept designs took far longer than we ever imagined. We went to tender on the advice of experts only to find that the quotes were way beyond our budget. We had to re-specify and go through the whole lengthy tender process again. There were heritage issues and asbestos to be removed from the site. Launch dates were set and went by. Nevertheless in 2001 construction began. With almost all our funding dedicated to the building program we had to rely on volunteers and sponsors for all aspects of finishing and equipping the site and buildings, including all the painting.

**We succeeded** in bringing the Headquarters project to fruition because, despite the difficulties, the founding partners continued to give their support – SKAWA, the Rotary Club of Heirisson, the Town of Vincent, Lotteries and Sport & Rec. **We succeeded** because of the volunteers who came to us, saw the vision for Headquarters and gave their time. Most of all **we succeeded** because we were all inspired by the exceptional young people who contributed so much to the vision and never gave up hope.

I'm honoured today to be able to formally thank everyone who has contributed towards Headquarters. I have five groups to thank:

#### **First, the Founding Partners:**

- A special thank you to the young people of SKAWA who have been involved in so many ways. They created the vision, contributed to the Headquarters Board and Management Team, assisted in designing the facility, helped project teams, and continue to work onsite and shape the future direction of Headquarters.
- Thank you to the 52 members of the Rotary Club of Heirisson for supporting the Headquarters project. Heirisson has led and worked on every project team and in the process **REINVENTED ROTARY**. We counted up the cost of the voluntary contribution to Headquarters and the figure was way above \$1 million. I'd like to add a special thank you to the core team of Rotarians, partners and friends who, together, guided the overall development, won all the funds, and achieved all the sponsorships and donations. You're an exceptional group of people and it's been a pleasure working with you.
- Thank you to Lotteries and Sport & Recreation for believing in us and committing the initial funds, and a special thank you to Lotteries staff for their

ongoing support in so many ways, including working alongside us in marketing and promotion.

- Thank you to the Town of Vincent for giving us that first big break – the site for Headquarters - and for your ongoing support, including capital funding of \$230,000. It's a win / win relationship. The young people of Perth now have a leading edge youth facility, and in return your site with the original two storey building in disrepair has been transformed into this wonderful facility. In addition, the Town now has a unique and ongoing partnering opportunity with Headquarters in youth services and youth development.

#### **Second, thank you to all those other government agencies that have worked with us:**

- Thank you to Police and Central Metropolitan College of TAFE, who have Memorandums of Understanding with Headquarters and membership on the HQ Board. Police have assisted us with risk management, and TAFE have created many innovative training and development opportunities.
- Thank you to the Department of Training & Employment for their extensive funding for computer facilities and access, for providing us with a senior staff member before we had a HQ Manager, and for donations of furniture and fittings.
- Thank you to Water Corporation, our nearest neighbour, and supporter in numerous ways - including permaculture gardens and the bottles of water we'll all be needing today.
- Thank you to the Department of Housing for providing us with an alternative location at Brownlie Towers while construction work took place here, to the Federal Department of Employment, for Work for the Dole opportunities, and to the WA Department for Justice, for enabling our involvement in Community Service Order programs.

**Third, thank you to our major sponsors -** Channel 7, 92.9, Gatecrasher and Audio Visual Lighting Australia (AVLA). You have really put us on the map. The television advertisements designed by Gatecrasher have already gone to air on Channel 7, 92.9 hosted a very successful live broadcast here last night, and AVLA are providing high tech equipment for gigs.

**Fourth, thank you to over thirty private sector companies,** named at the entry to the

art gallery, and so appreciated. You have given your time, expertise, products and funds, and contributed to every aspect of Headquarters – design, construction, equipment hire, electrical, plumbing, mechanical services, lighting (including the lighting of the skate park), painting, paving, landscaping, turf, reticulation, furniture, fittings, information systems and technology, signage, marketing and promotion, printing, legal services and more.

**Fifth**, thank you to every individual who has helped Headquarters, including the young people on Work for the Dole and Community Service Order Schemes, and their supervisors, who have all worked so enthusiastically for Headquarters, continued their involvement as volunteers, and made such a difference... And most of all I want to acknowledge Ian Matthews and the young people on the staff of Headquarters - Graham Withey (whose been with us since day one), Josephine Lebbing, Jarrah Rushton, Dave Bradley and Damon Staples. They are to be congratulated for their voluntary effort over the years, and now as staff members, for picking up the reins, running Headquarters and bringing us to this day. I know they all have a passion for Headquarters and contribute many extra hours of their own time.

Having come so far, and achieved so much, the future for Headquarters is filled with opportunity. The vision continues to grow:

- The information technology you'll see today is but a start. We have funds available and equipment promised to increase the number of workstations and expand further into multi media and Internet access.
- We've started the planning for a cover for the skate park to make Headquarters an all-weather venue. For this we will need to source funding of approximately half a million dollars.
- We're planning to hold regular art and craft markets as an opportunity for young people and as a fundraiser for Headquarters.
- Planning is happening and funding is being sought, or is already available, for a wide range of youth training and youth enterprise opportunities, including in partnership with TAFE.
- Stage 2 of the site is designed, though not yet funded, and provides a second story on this building to create an art studio, a stand alone café, retail outlets, extensions to the skate park, and overhead walkways.

- And, most important, we must ensure that, operationally, Headquarters is self funding.

Having scoped out the future, I think it's appropriate that I conclude with the Headquarters' Values – a very powerful statement developed by young people that says it all:

**“Headquarters is open to all people, regardless of race, creed, religion, age or socio-economic grouping.**

**Headquarters promotes and stands by:**

- **mutual respect and tolerance;**
- **a positive and encouraging atmosphere;**
- **providing opportunities for personal development; and**
- **an attitude of conscious care for the environment.**

**For and by all.”**

Please take the time after the official opening to go on a tour of Headquarters with one of the staff and please remember - one of the greatest gifts you could ever give to any young person is a Headquarters membership.

Thank you, everyone, for coming here today and sharing our celebration.