I am delighted to be speaking to you here at the Ballarat Club to acknowledge the legacy of one of our greatest citizens – Albert Coates.

Tonight we are here to raise funds for the Albert Coates Memorial Trust Nursing Scholarships programme. What we raise tonight will help fund scholarships for our rural nurses, a group of men and women who provide vital support to our rural community.

Tonight, I would also like to briefly tell you what the Government has done to commemorate the service of Australian men and women in the Ballarat region, and how we will commemorate the Anzac Centenary.

The Albert Coates Memorial Trust

The Albert Coates Memorial Trust has come from humble beginnings to what we see now.

As you well know, the Trust was founded in 1998 to develop a memorial to Ballarat-born Sir Albert Coates, a local hero.

The Trust, at the time, raised funds for a significant monument in Ballarat's Sturt St, lined with the iconic Sturt Street gardens.

The Trust, as it does today, relies on the hard work and dedication of its valuable volunteers.

I would like to take a moment to thank those who have volunteered for this Trust.

I suspect that if Sir Albert were to see the work and contribution being made today in his name, he would be very proud indeed.

Today, the Trust supports the leaders of tomorrow by sponsoring a range of student awards at the University of Ballarat, Mt Pleasant Primary School and the University of Melbourne.

The Trust is also growing. In 2008 a new programme of scholarships for the post-graduate training of rural emergency care nurses was introduced.

Sometimes forgotten, nurses in rural Australia assist those isolated from medical facilities in their time of need.
The Rural Nursing Scholarships provide great assistance, with course fees covered for a 12 month period for a Registered Nurses who intends to develop qualifications and experience in providing emergency services.

Each year the Trust provides these scholarships to a different rural area in Victoria - all rural areas benefit.

Ultimately, this is why we are here tonight, all donations made tonight will contribute to this fantastic initiative.

The new scholarships are provided with the very generous support of the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women who I again pay special thanks to tonight.

**Previous Scholarship and Award winners**

These scholarships have gone to some very inspiring young Australians in the past.

For 2012-13, six scholarships were awarded, totalling $23,200.

Ingrid Wise, studying at the School of Biomedical Science - Carleen Harmon studying at the School of Visual Arts, both from the University of Ballarat.

Then we had four recipients from the University of Melbourne: Jack Kane, Lachlan Brenan and Matt Morey, all studying at the Rural Clinical School; and Dr James Walcott, undertaking his post graduate Diploma in Surgical Anatomy.

Accompanying these scholarships, the Trust also sponsors several student awards each and every year.

In 2012-13, the Albert Coates Prize went to Tracey Hallam from the University of Ballarat.

The Trust also sponsors the James H. Pryor Award, which was awarded to Felizitas Wansbrough.

The Trust also jointly sponsors awards with the ‘Australian Legion of Ex-Service Men and Women’ and the ‘Sebastopol Bowling Club’.

W&D Finance and the Rotary Club of Melbourne also assist in sponsoring awards that are awarded to local university students to support their studies.

Each of these awards and scholarships are helping to support our local Ballarat students to further their education.

**Sir Albert Coates**

Now that I've touched on the great work that the Albert Coates Memorial Trust does, and past scholarship and award winners, I would like to acknowledge the man himself, Sir Albert Coates.

Born in Ballarat in 1895, Albert Coates was the eldest of seven children.

He was raised in a modest but affectionate family.

The values of honesty, industry and education instilled in his youth clearly became a legacy for his life.
On the 17th of August 1914 Albert enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and became a medical orderly in the 7th Battalion.

He served on Gallipoli and was one of the last to leave the peninsula on the night of 19/20 December 1915.

He went on to serve in France taking part in the battle of the Somme.

Sir John Monash and British authorities recognised Albert’s outstanding ability and, at the end of the war, he was invited to apply for a commission in the British Army.

Albert preferred, however, to go home to Australia where he found employment in the office of the Commonwealth Censor in Melbourne.

A vastly different life to what he had lead for the previous few years.

In 1919 he returned to his pre-war employer – the Postmaster-General’s Department working nightshifts while studying medicine at the University of Melbourne.

He graduated with first-class honours in all subjects.

He was a gifted general surgeon, teacher and orator and became one of Australia's pioneers in the field of Neurosurgery.

Albert is one of a special group of men who volunteered to serve during both the World Wars.

Appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Australian Army Medical Corps on the 1st of January 1941, Coates joined the Australian Imperial Force the next day.

He was posted to the 2nd/10th Australian General Hospital (AGH) and stationed at Malacca, Malaya.

After the Japanese invaded on December 8th, the 2nd/10th AGH fell back to Singapore; Coates was ordered to join a party which sailed on the 13th of February 1942 for Java, Netherlands East Indies.

The convoy was bombed and the survivors reached Tembilahan, Sumatra, where Coates saved many more lives with his surgical skill.

On the 28th of February he arrived at Padang, which would be occupied by the Japanese just three weeks later, resulting in his capture and subsequently being held as a POW.

In May 1942, Coates's captors moved him to Burma, at the Kilo-30 and Kilo-55 camps on the Burma-Thailand Railway, were he cared for hundreds of POWs under deplorable conditions.

In December 1943, the Japanese sent Coates to Thailand.

There, from March 1944, he was the chief medical officer of a POW hospital with a ward of 10,000 beds, at Nakhon Pathom (Nakompaton).

Through his initiative, resourcefulness and enthusiasm he was responsible for many improvisations which provided artificial limbs, transfusions and surgical appliances.

Sir Edward Dunlop would later recall Coates's as a 'short, upright figure with a ghost of a swagger, a Burma cheroot clamped in his mouth, and his staccato flow of kindly, earthly wisdom.
became the object of hero-worship and inspiration'.

With the cessation of hostilities, Coates returned home from the Second World War and resumed his hospital appointment, engaged in a large number of professional, teaching, lecturing and other community activities, and became a leader of the medical profession in Victoria.

In 1945 he transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 6 December, and was appointed O.B.E. the following year.

A great honour for a truly deserving man.

Knighted in 1955, Coates was president (1954-55) of the Melbourne Rotary Club and a council-member (1953-57) of the University of Melbourne which in 1962 awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Laws.

In 1971 he retired from medical practice, having dedicated decades of his life to serving his country.

A truly remarkable life came to an end on the 8th of October 1977 at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, as Sir Albert Coates passed away.

As a lasting tribute to the great man, a portrait of Albert Coates by Murray Griffin is held by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra; and two others, by Aileen Dent and Louis Kahan, are in his family's possession.

Sir Albert Coates was however in good company, as Ballarat is also home to some other extremely distinguished soldiers from the First World War.

William Dunstan, VC, born in Ballarat in 1895, received the Victoria Cross for his efforts on Gallipoli during the battle at Lone Pine.

Brigadier Pompey Elliott, CB CMG DCM DSO, born in 1878 was educated at Ballarat College. He served in the Boer War as well as the First World War.

Brigadier Elliott, landed at Gallipoli on 25 April, 1915.

He was shot in the foot on the first day and did not return until June, but quickly earned a reputation for courage and leadership.

The following year, while Brigadier General of the 15th Brigade, he led his Brigade into action on the Western Front, at Fromelles, a site that saw some 5,500 Australians killed and wounded in one night.

Brigadier Elliott felt keenly the impact of war and is said to have wept as he met survivors of Fromelles coming out of the line.

The city of Ballarat has produced some remarkable Australians who have served their country with courage and valor.

Anzac Centenary

The Centenary of Anzac will mark a century of service and sacrifice, encompassing all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations in which Australians have been involved. It will be the most significant period of commemoration in our nation's history and the Government is committed to providing opportunities for all Australians to participate.
The 1914-18 ‘Great War’, became the largest and most costly conflict the world had known, involving 70 million people worldwide. For Australia, the effects of war were profound and enduring.

The Anzac Centenary Program has been developed to ensure that the centenary provides the opportunity to honour, better understand and reflect on the service and sacrifice of our servicemen and women. This of course includes the significant contribution of those on the home front.

I am pleased to report that to date, the Government is supporting 14 Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program grants totalling $109,256 in Ballarat.

Planning is well underway for the Albany Convoy Commemorative Event (ACCE) in Western Australia, the first major domestic Anzac Centenary activity commencing on Friday 31 October 2014.

It will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the departure of the first convoy of ships carrying the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) to the First World War.

Troops from Ballarat were among those who sailed from Albany in the first convoy.

Albany was their last Australian port before arriving in Egypt to commence their training. The majority would go on to take part in landings at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. Sadly, for many, it was the last time they saw Australia.

In talking about what the Government is doing to commemorate servicemen and women in the Ballarat region and throughout Australia, I also want to reassure you that our work doesn’t stop with commemorations.

We continue to support our nations veterans, to ensure they get the support they truly deserve.

We are constantly looking at new ways, and new channels, to support veterans, and their families.

We provide vital services that can be accessed through many channels, including social media.

Closing remarks

As I leave you tonight, I would like to finish by saying that Sir Albert Coates was an inspiring Australian whose life and work serves as an example for all Australians.

With your assistance the Sir Albert Coates Memorial Trust fund will be able to continue its great work well into the future.

I thank you all for coming tonight to support this cause, I would also like to ask you to never forget our ex-servicemen and women, like Sir Albert Coates, and ensure the legacy that they have all left behind lives on.

Thankyou.