

**Speech in honour of Dr Pamela Wall OAM**  
**at her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday dinner**  
**by Professor Don Markwell AM, Head of St Mark's College**  
**Carrick Hill, Friday 19 July 2024**

In recent months, as no doubt you would expect of anyone about to turn 90, Pammie Wall's favourite song has been "Flowers", last year's hit by Miley Cyrus. As Pammie is driven from one of her infinite engagements to another, she has sat in the back of the car, always elegantly dressed, bopping – literally bopping – to this catchy tune.

As today our favourite bopper has turned 90, here we all are at this long-awaited party, recipients all of the most exquisite invitation almost any of us has ever seen, with Pammie in her stunning gown, bedecked with flowers. The only surprise is that it isn't pink!

All of us are here to celebrate, united by our special friendship, admiration, gratitude, affection, and – yes – love for this exceptional woman.

While "Flowers" by Miley Cyrus is Pammie's current favourite song, over the last couple of years one of her favourite songs has been "Simply the Best" by Tina Turner. Understandably, and accurately, she has used its refrain – "simply the best, better than all the rest" – to describe the incomparable Ian, whom we all remember tonight with love also. But those words describe Pammie herself – "simply the best, better than all the rest".

What can one say about Pamela Maunsell Hogon – as her mother would say, h-o-g-Q-n – as Pammie was born on this day 90 years ago?

If you don't know this already, it will come as no surprise that Pammie's mother was, at the age of 24, voted the most beautiful young woman in Adelaide. Pammie's father – bank manager, sportsman, pianist, warm-hearted friend of all – had a special bond with their only child. As you probably know, as Pammie's parents moved from bank to bank in country South Australia, Pammie at the age of 10 went to board at Woodlands, and never returned to live at home.

Her childhood dream was to become a nurse, looking after children. After completing her six years at Woodlands, she worked in the bank until, at the age

of 18, she could start her nursing training at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

Already she had met an engineering student and student leader at nearby St Mark's College, Ian Baker Wall – Ian, the loyal and grateful product of Pulteney, Saints, and the University of Adelaide as well as St Mark's. Tales of their courtship are legendary, including Pammie spending every penny she had on an alluring strapless dress for a St Mark's College Ball. As she has said, she might as well give everything a go. Maybe that was the night that Ian's mother said, quite presciently, "I think she's the one". And so she was.

Ian and Pammie were married in August 1954, Annabel – whom it is a delight to see tonight – was born the following year, and Cindy in 1957. The children's nurse became a mother; supported Ian in countless ways in starting and building up what became Codan; became a model and an artist – a painter – and a racing car driver; after major surgery, began to travel overseas, including in time to her beloved Paris and Geneva, where she skilfully deployed her excellent French and rapidly-evaporating travellers' cheques; began to serve the wider community through service on fundraising and planning committees for charities such as Legacy and Novita; served on the Codan board for some 20 years; and, as Ian and Pammie's capacity for philanthropy grew, expanded her community service and philanthropy to the astonishing array of organisations that she and Ian have supported so generously over many years, and which she continues to support today – many represented here tonight by dear friends of Pammie's.

As you know, in 2007 Pammie was recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia for – and I quote – "service to the community through a range of disability support, veterans' welfare and charitable organisations". Her service – including to children's health and wellbeing, education, and the arts, especially here in this city she loves – has grown even further since then in remarkable ways. As Tim McCormack has rightly put it, Pammie and Ian have together supported the institutions that shaped them, as well as other organisations and causes that matter to them.

Pammie's continuing service and generosity, with their enduring impact, have been recognised with an honorary doctorate of the University of Adelaide, election as an Honorary Fellow of St Mark's College, and with the highest, unsought honours from other organisations also.

Not only does Pammie have an extraordinary generosity of spirit and an instinct for kindness and desire to be helpful, she also has exceptional warmth, shrewd insight into the best and the worst in the human heart, an engaging and even inspiring capacity to speak unscripted from the heart, exquisite taste, strength in adversity, startling energy, and boundless capacity for friendship and for fun. As a young woman, she befriended Sir Edward Hayward, and that friendship led in time to Ian and Pammie's involvement with Carrick Hill, which has ultimately led us here tonight. And Pammie has befriended every single person at this dinner tonight – in some cases decades ago, and some as recently as the last year or two. One element of her capacity for friendship is the endearing openness and warmth with which she engages new people. You are “darling” from the moment you meet, and her smile can truly light up a room, and instantly win new friends.

She is, as Tina Turner would have it, “simply the best”.

A few months ago, Pammie – our favourite bopper - and I went to see Gladys Knight – the Empress of Soul – Gladys Knight but without the Pips, at the Adelaide Festival Centre.

One of Gladys Knight's best-known songs is “That's what friends are for”, and a refrain through that song says “keep smilin', keep shinin'”. This is exactly what Pammie does – she keeps smilin', keeps shining'.

Pammie, please keep smilin', keep shinin'. We all love you, and we all wish you the happiest of birthdays.

You're simply the best!