Good morning and thank you for inviting me to speak at the launch of this wonderful book.

Before I begin I would like to acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, as the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet.

I also extend my respects to Elders past, present and future, and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I would also like to acknowledge:  
- Lesley Jordan, CEO of Twilight Aged Care.  
- Lorraine Lovitt, Chair of Twilight Aged Care.  
- And of course, Ron Ringer, the author of the book that brings us all here today.

Aged care has certainly changed in the past 100 years. Reading Ron’s book, I’m struck by just how much it has changed.

A century or more ago, how we talked about ageing and aged care was somewhat bleak – particularly for those of limited financial means.

Terms like “asylum” were used, and people found themselves living in basic wards, if they were lucky enough to secure care at all.

There was little regulation, and virtually no recognition of choice or control for consumers.

Most disadvantaged in those days were older single women – a group who, actually, can also face challenges today.

But winding the clock back to November 2012, in this very same sumptuous room, a new era began, when Twilight aged care was born.
This book is aptly titled “An Australian Story”, because the foundation of Twilight perfectly reflected the highly progressive – and on many social issues, world-leading – role of Australia at the time.

As Ron details in these colourful pages, our newly federated nation had just become the first place on earth where women could both vote and stand for election to Parliament.

Leading Australian women were travelling the world, telling their sisters in laggard nations like the United States and Great Britain, that it was time for change.

Australia was making other great leaps forward, too, with the introduction of pensions for all, plus a raft of social welfare measures to support equal opportunity for girls and women.

But deeply concerning for the progressive group of females who met here almost 105 years ago, was the plight of older women.

To quote our esteemed author - “it was resolved to establish a home for women who found themselves in the twilight of their lives, with limited means and in need of a refuge from the cold comfort of the ordinary boarding house”.

Within a month, they’d raised 17 pounds – more than a pretty penny, but way short of the small fortune of 4,000 pounds they needed!

I won’t give too much more of this enthralling tale away, but suffice to say, despite the outbreak of the Great War and a variety of challenges, less than three years later, the sun rose on their Twilight dream – with a queue of elderly gentlewomen awaiting accommodation.

To quote one of these ladies: “Here for us there are no domestic worries. Household duties get done as if by magic, under the moving spirit of our much loved Matron. We have perfect liberty to do just as we please, from early morn ‘til dewy eve.”

The older Australians in Twilight Aged Care were – and still are – fortunate, to be looked after in a tradition that now spans more than a century, but has so successfully adapted to meet the needs of changing times.

Just as it has from the very beginning, volunteering still plays an important role in providing support, but Twilight has always prided itself on professional care.

Nowadays, of course – and in the spirit of equality that helped establish this grand institution – Twilight welcomes both men and women, and has grown from one residential home to five.

So highly regarded is Twilight that many bequests have been left by residents over the years, to help continue its work.

I’d like to pay a special tribute to Ron Ring and all who have helped put this book together.

What you have created is no dry tome, but a compelling read that places the fascinating story of Twilight in the context of Sydney, Australian and world affairs over the years.
It’s full of anecdotes, from the early fundraising balls, to the dark days of World War Two air raid drills, and is a pictorial feast that reflects not only the life of Twilight, but all of our lives – and I’m honoured to be included in a couple of the photos near the end.

This is a book that reminds us of how lucky we are.

Twilight continues to be a shining example of Australian vision and compassion, with this fine history reflecting the evolution of aged care – changing to meet community expectations and clients’ needs.

One constant, though, is Twilight’s commitment to providing quality – with the dignity of older people always at the fore.

Congratulations, and it gives me great pleasure to launch this truly remarkable Australian Story.

Thank you.