



**AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN FULBRIGHT COMMISSION
AND UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA
RECEPTION TO MARK THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FULBRIGHT PROGRAM
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2026**

Good evening, everyone. I am delighted to welcome you all to Government House as we mark the 80th anniversary of the Fulbright Program and celebrate Tasmania's contribution to this long-standing partnership between Australia and the United States.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Palawa people as the First Peoples of lutruwita/Tasmania and the Traditional Custodians of the land we're gathered on today.

For countless generations, they have cared for this island, its landscapes, its waterways and its communities, and I'm so grateful to be able to live here.

I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and to any Aboriginal people with us today. Your continuing contribution to the cultural, social and spiritual life of our State is deeply valued.

Tonight provides an opportunity not only to reflect on 80 years of achievement, but also to recognise all those who have made this initiative an important force for international cooperation.

Established in 1946 in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Fulbright Program was founded with a powerful vision: to build peace and understanding through international educational exchange.

Over the past eight decades, more than 500,000 students, academics, and professionals have received Fulbright Scholarships to study, teach or conduct research.

US citizens have pursued academic, scholarly and professional opportunities in more than 160 countries worldwide, while citizens of partner countries have travelled to the United States for postgraduate study, research, teaching and professional exchange, fostering enduring relationships and strengthening ties between nations.

Fulbright's impact can be measured not only in the number of exchanges, but in what alumni have gone on to contribute, both to their countries and to the world. The alumni network spans science, medicine, government, diplomacy, the arts, business, education and public service, including 63 Nobel Prize laureates, 46 current or former Heads of State or Government and 93 Pulitzer Prize winners. A pretty impressive contribution, I am sure you'll agree!

However, perhaps the program's greatest achievement lies not in individual accolades, but in the way it has built relationships, knowledge and perspectives to help us to address shared challenges.

Since Australia joined the Fulbright Program in 1949, it has played a significant role in strengthening connections between Australia and the United States through educational and cultural exchange.

Our State has proudly been part of that story, with more than one hundred exchanges linking Tasmania with the United States, and the University of Tasmania serving as an important partner and host institution.

These exchanges have opened doors for researchers, academics and students while helping to showcase Tasmania's own expertise and innovation on the global stage.

Fulbright has provided Tasmanian researchers with the chance to undertake research and build connections at leading US institutions, while US Fulbright scholars have come to Tasmania and contributed to our State's research community.

From marine ecologist Professor Gretta Pecl's research into climate change impacts in our warming oceans, to Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter's work to conduct comparative research on Indigenous educational data and policy, Tasmanian Fulbright scholars have made an outsized impact in areas that are both locally significant and globally important.

Tasmania has distinctive research strengths in several fields including Antarctic and Southern Ocean studies, marine science, climate change, biodiversity and conservation, and health and medical research. Fulbright has helped to raise the profile of this research internationally and allowed our people to contribute their expertise to global conversations.

Of course, these fields also speak directly to some of the greatest opportunities and challenges facing our world today. As we celebrate this important milestone, we are reminded that the need for international cooperation, mutual respect and the exchange of ideas has never been greater.

I know that Tasmania will continue to play an important role in these collaborative efforts. Through our research expertise, our educational institutions and our strong culture of innovation and enquiry, we have much to contribute to the global discussions on climate, oceans, biodiversity and sustainability that will shape the decades ahead.

That is why this year's anniversary celebrations are not simply about looking back on the past 80 years. They also inspire us to look forward.

It is so important that we encourage the next generation of scholars, researchers, artists and professionals. We must also continue to create opportunities for Tasmanians to engage internationally and ensure that international exchange remains relevant in a rapidly changing world. Tasmania's potential to keep contributing ideas and expertise to the global community is boundless.

To the Fulbright alumni, scholars and partners gathered here this evening, thank you for your contributions to this important program and to the spirit of international understanding that it represents.

May the next 80 years of Australia-US exchange be marked by the same curiosity, generosity and commitment to collaboration that have defined the Fulbright story thus far.

Thank you, and please enjoy the reception.