



**MAGNOLIA PLACE, LAUNCESTON WOMEN'S SHELTER
50 YEARS FORWARD
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
LAUNCESTON, TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2026**

Good evening and thank you for the kind invitation to join you as we mark Magnolia Place, 50 Years Forward.

I too would like to 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.

Fifty years is a long time to keep a door open. Since 1975, Magnolia Place has done exactly that for thousands of women and children across Northern Tasmania. It has been there for those escaping domestic and family violence, and those with nowhere safe to go.

Each of them is a person with a family and a future. What they needed was often simple, but never small: a safe place to stay, someone who would listen without judgement, and the knowledge that they did not have to face it alone.

Through my own work in health, community and not-for-profit organisations, I have seen what the right support at the right time can do. It can restore safety, dignity and the belief that things can change. That is why Magnolia Place matters so deeply.

This afternoon I had the privilege of meeting Australia's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, Micaela Cronin. Her latest report to the nation says plainly what many in this room have known for fifty years: safety and a roof over your head cannot be separated.

Secure, affordable housing remains one of the greatest barriers to a woman finding lasting safety after she leaves violence. Almost one in four people experiencing family violence who sought help from a specialist homelessness service still had an unmet need for accommodation. And persistent homelessness among women and children affected by family violence is now at its highest level in the period the report covers.

These are not just statistics. These are women and children who reached out for help and were still left without a safe place to go.

Domestic and family violence reaches women and children from every walk of life in Tasmania and across Australia, and its harm can last a lifetime. Safe accommodation and specialist support are not optional extras. They are what allows a person to begin rebuilding.

No single organisation can meet that need alone. It takes a whole community, with compassion, understanding and a shared determination that women and children will be safe.

Tonight we recognise everyone who has made Magnolia Place possible. The staff and volunteers, past and present board members, government partners, donors, businesses and community organisations. Your generosity and belief in this work have sustained an essential service for five decades.

Most of all, we honour the women and children whose lives Magnolia Place has touched. They are the reason this work must continue.

The Commissioner describes her vision for the future in words borrowed from the homelessness sector itself: a world where violence is rare, brief and non-recurring. That is what this place has always worked towards, and it is the future you are building for the next fifty years.

That is the spirit of tonight's theme, 50 Years Forward. As Magnolia Place unveils its refreshed identity, it carries fifty years of experience and a continuing purpose: to provide safety, support and opportunity for women and children across Northern Tasmania.

Congratulations to everyone who has brought Magnolia Place to this milestone. Thank you for the care you provide, the difference you make, and the hope you offer.

May the next fifty years build on this legacy, and may that door stay open for every woman and child who needs it.

Thank you.