AUSTRALIAN PANCREATIC CANCER FOUNDATION (PANKIND AUSTRALIA) RECEPTION TO MARK WORLD PANCREATIC CANCER AWARENESS MONTH REMARKS BY HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS AC GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2026

VICE-REGAL SALUTE

Good evening, everyone.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here to Government House as we come together to mark World Pancreatic Cancer Month.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Palawa people as the First Peoples of Lutruwita/Tasmania and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather this evening.

For countless generations, they have cared for this island, its landscapes, waterways and communities. I feel very fortunate to live, work and play on this beautiful island.

I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people joining us this evening. Your continuing contribution to the cultural, social and spiritual life of our State is deeply valued.

We gather tonight to shine a light on a disease that touches far too many Australian families. Each year, more than 4,500 Australians are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, bringing with it uncertainty, fear and, all too often, heartbreak.

Pancreatic cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death in Australia and remains one of our most challenging common cancers. Tragically, only around one in five people diagnosed will survive beyond two years.

But behind these statistics are real people. People whose lives, and the lives of those who love them, are changed forever by a diagnosis. And yet, despite its devastating impact, pancreatic cancer does not always receive the public attention and awareness it deserves.

That is why occasions such as this evening are so important.

Last Thursday, on World Pancreatic Cancer Day, landmarks across Australia, including 35 locations here in Tasmania, were illuminated in purple. They have continued to shine throughout this month.

It is a simple but powerful gesture. Each purple light helps bring this disease into the public eye, encourages conversations and reminds those affected that they are not alone.

The theme of this year's awareness campaign, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, is particularly important.

Pancreatic cancer can be difficult to detect in its early stages because the symptoms are often subtle, vague or easily mistaken for everyday ailments. In our busy lives, it is easy to dismiss changes in our health. We tell ourselves, "I'm just tired", "It's probably stress" or "I'm just getting a bit older".

But sometimes our bodies are telling us something more.

Symptoms can include abdominal or back pain, unexplained weight loss, a reduced appetite or developing diabetes unexpectedly. While these symptoms can have many causes, it is important not to ignore changes that persist or cannot be explained.

The message of this year's campaign is a simple one: know your body, listen to it and don't put off getting checked. As a GP of 44 years, Rob has told me a number of very sad stories where diagnosis was delayed, and he just wishes people would come forward earlier. We all know our own body, and we know when things don't feel right.

We are fortunate to be joined this evening by people who have experienced this journey personally, whether through their own diagnosis or by supporting someone they love. Your presence here, and your willingness to share your experiences, is incredibly important. Your voices help others understand the reality of this disease and remind us why awareness, early investigation and continued research matter so much.

To everyone currently living with pancreatic cancer, I want you to know that you are in our thoughts and hearts. Not just during November, but every day of the year.

We recognise the courage it takes to face a diagnosis, the challenges of treatment and the uncertainty that can come with each new day. We hope you feel surrounded by care, compassion and support, and know that there are many people working towards a brighter future for you.

To the partners, families, friends and carers who walk alongside someone living with this disease, we acknowledge you too. Your love, strength and devotion make an extraordinary difference, often through the smallest acts of kindness and care.

And to those who have lost someone they love, we recognise that the impact of pancreatic cancer does not end with a diagnosis or a death. The loss remains, as does the love and the memory of those who are no longer with us.

This evening is also an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the remarkable people working to change the future of pancreatic cancer.

In particular, we remember Avner Nahmani, who, together with his wife Caroline, established, in 2007, what is now known as Pankind.

Avner sadly passed away just 13 months after his diagnosis. While his life was cut far too short, his vision has created a remarkable legacy. Today, Pankind continues that work by supporting people affected by pancreatic cancer and investing in research. Since its establishment, Pankind has invested $20 million across 89 research projects, making it one of Australia's leading funders of pancreatic cancer research.

Its ambitious mission to triple survival rates by 2030 is a powerful expression of hope and determination. And there are reasons to be hopeful.

We are seeing encouraging progress in research, with scientists and clinicians working to better understand this disease and develop more effective treatments.

This year, results from a major international clinical trial of a new targeted tablet, daraxonrasib, offered particular promise for people with previously treated advanced pancreatic cancer. The trial reported a doubling of median survival to 13.2 months, compared with 6.6 months with standard chemotherapy.

While much work remains, results like these demonstrate what sustained investment, scientific innovation and collaboration can achieve.
Most importantly, they offer hope to patients and families who need it most.

I am a passionate supporter of medical research, and we must continue to grow investment, improve early detection and diagnosis, support people living with the disease and ensure promising treatments reach patients as quickly as possible.

To everyone here tonight who has contributed through research, fundraising, advocacy, personal experience or raising awareness, thank you. Your commitment is helping build a future in which fewer families will face the heartbreak of this disease.

Let us leave tonight with a shared sense of purpose and hope: hope for earlier diagnosis, better treatments and longer, healthier lives.

Together, we can help change the future for people affected by pancreatic cancer.

Thank you for being here and supporting this important cause.

I wish you all a very pleasant evening, and please enjoy the reception.