



**HOBART GANG SHOW
RECEPTION TO MARK THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026**

VICE-REGAL SALUTE PLAYED

Good evening, and welcome to Government House.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here this evening, as we mark fifty remarkable years of the Hobart Gang Show. Rob and I were delighted to be with you for opening night at the Mt Nelson Theatre, and what a night it was. We both thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and thank you for making us feel so welcome.

I will begin by acknowledging the Palawa people as the First Peoples of lutruwita/Tasmania and the Traditional Custodians of this land. For countless generations, they have cared for and nurtured this remarkable island, its landscapes, waterways and communities.

I pay my respects to Elders past and present and recognise the enduring contribution of Aboriginal Tasmanians to the cultural, social and spiritual life of our State.

Now, back to opening night. I have to say, the standard on that stage took us both rather by surprise. The singers were simply outstanding, and I don't think I stopped smiling through the skits, which were performed with such wit and confidence. And of course, I don't think anyone in the audience will soon forget the moment Neil the Seal made his appearance or the Four Little Fellas!

It is exactly the kind of joyful surprise that has kept audiences coming back to Gang Show for five decades.

The Gang Show tradition has a remarkable history of its own. The first show was performed in 1932 in London, when a Rover named Ralph Reader put on a performance to raise funds for a swimming pool at his local Scout camp. Little did he know what he was about to start. Scouting's founder, Lord Baden-Powell, attended the second performance and immediately recognised the value that performing arts could bring to young people.

The show found its way to Tasmania in 1956, when local Scouting leaders who had seen a production in Melbourne decided that Hobart should have a show of its own.

It continued until 1969, before the curtain came down for a time. More than twenty years later, Don Fitzpatrick helped bring the Gang Show back to life, and following a trial concert in 1990, a small and determined team took on the challenge of rebuilding the show from the ground up.

You also had to navigate COVID and so great to see you took the Gang Show online and shared it around Australia.

So over 50 years you just got on, quietly and confidently, as we do here in Tasmania and tonight, we see the fruits of that perseverance, half a century on.

I was particularly struck, watching on opening night, by just how much this show belongs to its young people. Since 2011, Hobart Gang Show has been written entirely by its youth members, with guidance from Scouting leadership. That ownership shows, on stage and off.

Because a production like this is never really about one performance. It is about the months beforehand, the auditions, the rehearsals, the costumes stitched and sets built.

It is about hundreds of young people, over fifty years, learning to rely on one another. A show like this asks a great deal of the people who make it — discipline, imagination, resilience.

It teaches the confidence to stand in front of an audience and the equally important lesson of contributing quietly backstage, without applause (or not as one skit highlighted!).

But more than any of that, it engenders friendship. Gang Show brings young people together, gives them a shared purpose, and asks them to trust the person standing next to them, whether that is on stage, behind a curtain, or in the band.

Those bonds, forged through working towards something together, are what turn a cast and crew into a genuine team, and into relationships that last well beyond the final curtain call. The other thing that struck me was how long so many people have been involved. You really are one big family.

We particularly liked the video recorded messages that were shared throughout the show. These really captured the spirit, friendship and connection that are the hallmarks of the Gang Show.

This year's title, 'Threads of Gold, Five Decades, One Dream', captures that beautifully. It's such a perfect title. Each person who has ever picked up a prop, learned a line, or sat in that band has added another thread to this story, and tonight we celebrate the whole, golden tapestry they have woven together.

So, this evening is a chance to say thank you.

To the producers and leaders who have guided the show with such care and expertise. To the volunteers and families who have given countless hours behind the scenes and, above all, to the generations of young people, including the wonderful cast we watched on opening night, who have brought their energy, imagination and enthusiasm to the stage.

Congratulations to everyone involved in fifty years of Hobart Gang Show.

We look forward to seeing many more golden threads woven in the years ahead.

Please enjoy the reception.