FROM THE SHADOWS INC
LAUNCH OF COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOBART, MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2026

Good evening, everyone. It is a pleasure to join you here at the Hobart Mint as we launch the final part of the *From the Shadows* project.

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 grateful to be able to live, work and play 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.

I am so pleased to join you once again to reflect on the experiences of convict women and their children. It was an honour to unveil Rowan Gillespie's new sculptures at St John's Park last month, reaffirming our commitment to preserving the memory of the Orphan School children and their place in Tasmania's history.

As we know, history most often remembers men who led, explored or fought. Yet it is equally important that we recognise the women whose quiet contributions sustained generations, and the children whose stories deserve to be remembered, even when history left little trace of them.

This is why the *From the Shadows* project is so meaningful to our Tasmanian community. The sculpture trail which runs from the Cascades Female Factory to St John's Park, via the *Footsteps Towards Freedom* statues on Hobart's waterfront, helps us see beyond the historical record and connect with the lives of convict women and their children.

The sculptures are a moving acknowledgement of their hardships, their strength and the lasting contribution they made to Tasmania. They are more than mere lumps of metal, and that is why it was so heartbreaking when the Orphan School statues were selfishly stolen last year, to be melted down for scrap.

Happily, the community rallied together to replace the statues, raising funds and commissioning Rowan to recreate his work from the original mould he still held in Ireland.

And while the original statues were mostly lost after their destruction, Tasmania Police were able to recover some fragments of the little girl sculpture – and that brings us to today's event.

The medals we launch today have been created from those fragments, as a final commemoration in the *From the Shadows* project. How wonderful that something beautiful can come from such thoughtless destruction!

I acknowledge the work of Troy Langman and his team from the Hobart Mint for their craftsmanship in casting these limited-edition bronze medals, which will serve as a lasting tribute to both the *From the Shadows* project and the convict women and children whose stories it seeks to honour.

Finally, may I commend Dr Dianne Snowdon and Bob Gordon, and all the members of the *From the Shadows* team for your dedication to this project over many years. Your commitment to bringing these important stories to light, and your determination to raise the funds needed for both the original statues and their replacements, has ensured that the experiences of convict women and children will not be forgotten.

With the creation of these commemorative medals, the project reaches a fitting conclusion, leaving an enduring tribute to those whose stories have too often remained in the shadows.

It is now my pleasure to officially launch the *From the Shadows* commemorative medals.

Thank you.