



**COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION IN TASMANIA
2026 STATE CONFERENCE
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
PONTVILLE, SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Good morning, everyone.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today, and a particular honour to officially open the 89th State Conference of the Country Women's Association of Tasmania.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the Palawa people as the First Peoples of Lutruwita/Tasmania and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today.

For countless generations, Aboriginal Tasmanians have cared for and nurtured this remarkable island — its lands, 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.

It is especially meaningful for me to be here today as your new Patron, as we celebrate not only this year's Conference, but also 90 years of the CWA in Tasmania.

Ninety years is quite an achievement.

Since 1936, the CWA has been part of the fabric of Tasmanian life. Generation after generation of members have come together in towns and cities right across our State, united by friendship, service and a desire to make a difference.

And what strikes me most about the CWA story is that, when Tasmania has needed you, you have been there.

During the Second World War, CWA members made camouflage nets for the Defence Forces and sent thousands of food parcels, mittens and gloves to Australian troops serving overseas.

Then, in the aftermath of the devastating 1967 bushfires, when so many Tasmanians lost their homes and, tragically, their lives, CWA members once again stepped forward. You provided practical support to people in need and helped rebuild the Jessie Keane Holiday Home at Snug after it was destroyed in the fires.

And when COVID changed the way we all lived and connected, the CWA adapted once again — holding meetings on Zoom and establishing an online branch so that women could continue to come together, support one another and serve their communities.

That ability to adapt, while staying true to your values, is one of the great strengths of the CWA.

And today, your work is as relevant as ever.

With around 700 members connected through branches across Tasmania and online, and with four new and re-opened branches welcomed over the past year, it is wonderful to see the CWA continuing to grow and thrive.

When I was sworn in as Governor earlier this year, I spoke about my commitment to leading with kindness, compassion and purpose. Those are qualities I see reflected so clearly in the CWA.

You are people who get things done. But you do so with generosity, friendship and care.

I have recently had the opportunity to learn more about how we brand Tasmania. I discovered that our brand is not simply a logo or a catchphrase — it is a story.

It is a story about determination, quality, quiet confidence and connection. A story described beautifully as “the quiet pursuit of the extraordinary.”

I think you know something about that.

Because much of what CWA members do is done quietly, without seeking recognition or fanfare — but it makes an extraordinary difference.

You support local charities and emergency services organisations. You make Cuddle Teddies for vulnerable children. You prepare baby bundles for new mothers. You knit blankets for residents in aged care.

And when hardship strikes, whether here in Tasmania, elsewhere in Australia or further afield, CWA members find a way to help.

That is service in its simplest and most powerful form: seeing a need, and doing something about it.

But the CWA offers something else that is just as important — connection.

For 90 years, you have created places where women can come together, form friendships, share skills, support one another and feel that they belong.

That sense of belonging matters enormously, particularly at a time when many people can feel increasingly isolated.

Your members have embraced change while remaining true to the traditions of fellowship and service that have sustained the Association for nine decades.

And as you look towards the next 90 years, I believe those traditions will continue to be your greatest strength — alongside your commitment to inclusion, acceptance and friendship.

That makes the theme of this year's Conference, "Moving Forward", particularly fitting. The future will undoubtedly bring new challenges. But it will also bring new opportunities, and I have no doubt that the CWA will continue to meet both with the same energy, resilience and generosity that have characterised your work for the past 90 years.

Your core values — Inclusion and Acceptance; Service and Impact; and Friendship and Support — provide a strong foundation for that future.

And your Collective's call to "keep us brave and kind" is a wonderful reminder that progress is at its best when courage is accompanied by compassion, and leadership is grounded in service to others.

I particularly commend your focus for the coming year on supporting women at risk of homelessness, including the growing number of older women experiencing housing insecurity.

The increase in older women seeking homelessness services is deeply concerning. It reminds us that even in a prosperous community, there are women who can find themselves facing circumstances they never expected.

Your partnership with Blue Sky House in Hobart is an excellent example of what can be achieved when community organisations come together to provide connection, dignity, safety and hope.

Initiatives such as this demonstrate the CWA at its best: responding to the needs of today while remaining faithful to your enduring commitment to caring for others.

I know that organisations like the CWA do not thrive simply because of good ideas or good intentions. They thrive because ordinary people give extraordinary amounts of their time.

Last month, I had the great pleasure of meeting members of the Lindisfarne Branch at their 85th anniversary celebration.

It was a wonderful opportunity to hear some of their stories and to experience firsthand the warmth and friendship that are such a hallmark of the CWA. I look forward to meeting many more of you from branches right across Tasmania during my term as Patron.

I thank every one of you — for the hours spent organising, cooking, knitting, fundraising, travelling, volunteering, welcoming new members and supporting your communities. Thank you for the difference you make.

I also acknowledge the leadership and dedication of the CWA State Executive and thank the outgoing members for their service.

To the incoming Executive, I wish you every success as you lead the Association into its next chapter. I hope you approach that future with confidence, optimism and, of course, a little of that CWA determination!

But perhaps the greatest tribute to those who came before you is to continue their work — to welcome new members, to build new friendships, to respond

to new needs, and to ensure that the CWA remains a place where women can come together to make a difference.

So, as you move forward, may you continue to do what you have always done so well: to be brave when courage is needed, kind when compassion is called for, and purposeful in your service to others.

I wish you all an inspiring, productive and enjoyable Conference.

Congratulations to the Country Women's Association of Tasmania on 90 years of service, friendship and community.

And now, it is my great pleasure to officially declare the 89th Country Women's Association of Tasmania State Conference open.

Thank you.