



**GUIDE DOGS TASMANIA GRADUATION CEREMONY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
SOUTH HOBART, TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Good afternoon, everyone.

It is a great pleasure to join you for the 2026 Guide Dogs Tasmania Graduation Ceremony.

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 gather today. For countless generations, Palawa people have cared for and nurtured this remarkable island, its lands, waterways and communities.

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

As Patron of Guide Dogs Tasmania, it is an enormous privilege to be here today to celebrate 19 very special and very furry graduates as they prepare to begin the next chapter of their lives.

Today is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate what these dogs have achieved, the partnerships they are about to form, and the many people who have helped them along the way.

It is difficult to overstate the difference that Guide, Assistance and Facility Dogs can make to a person's life. Through their training, companionship and extraordinary dedication, they can support greater independence, confidence and safety, and help people participate more fully in their families, workplaces and communities.

I am particularly pleased that today's graduates will be supporting Tasmanians living with low vision, disability and illness, right here in our own State. It is so important that Tasmanians have access to specialist dogs, training and support that understand and respond to the communities and the environments in which they live.

Every dog has their own important pathway, and today we celebrate each of them and the contribution they are about to make.

We applaud Guide Dogs Thelma, Monty and Zeeka as they set off to help Karen, Nicole and Jenny navigate the world with greater independence and confidence.

We wish Facility Dogs Gracie and Baxter every success as they begin supporting people in challenging circumstances.

We congratulate Assistance Dog Ikey, and Home Support Dogs Moni and Scottie, who will play an important role in enhancing their clients' quality of life.

And we think of the many people living with disability and illness whose lives will be enriched by the companionship of Charlie, Josie, Piper, Paisley, Quilla, Uma, Reggie and Arnie.

Finally, we wish Unity, Vera and Bridget all the very best as they play their part in nurturing the next generation of Guide Dogs through the breeding program. Of course, today is about much more than 19 highly trained and very special dogs.

It is also about the remarkable community of people who stand behind every one of them — a community that is such an important part of the Guide Dogs Tasmania family.

As I have travelled around our State over the past few months, I have been struck by how many of Tasmania's most meaningful contributions are made quietly and generously — through kindness, compassion and a willingness to help others.

That spirit is beautifully reflected in every dog graduating today. Behind each of these dogs is a remarkable network of people.

There are the **puppy raisers** and boarders who care for them from their earliest days, helping them grow in confidence and learn about the world around them.

There are the **brood carers** who provide loving homes for the dogs who help make the next generation possible.

There are the **trainers** who patiently develop the skills these dogs will need for their future roles.

And there are the **volunteers, donors, sponsors and staff** whose time, generosity and expertise sustain the Guide Dogs Tasmania program.

Every contribution matters.

Together, you are helping Tasmanians to live with greater independence, feel safer and more confident, and participate more fully in community life. One of my most important priorities as Governor is promoting accessibility and inclusion for all Tasmanians.

We want communities where everyone feels they belong, where every ability is valued, and where every person is treated with dignity, respect and kindness.

Inclusion is about making sure everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in society — regardless of ability, age, gender, language, cultural background or beliefs.

And it is something we can all contribute to.

Guide Dogs Tasmania has been helping make that vision a reality for generations.

I commend you for the enduring and deeply valued role you play in our Tasmanian community. For almost seven decades, your work has helped generations of Tasmanians to participate more fully in education, employment, family and community life.

As you approach your 70th anniversary in 2027, that work is as important as ever.

As demand for specialist services continues to grow, so too does the need for volunteers, supporters and community partners. I thank everyone here today for the part you play in building a more inclusive, compassionate and connected Tasmania, and for your commitment to Tasmanians living with low vision, disability and illness.

Today, then, is a celebration on many levels.

We celebrate these remarkable dogs and everything they have achieved.
We celebrate the people whose patience, skill, generosity and love have helped prepare them for the roles ahead.

And, most importantly, we celebrate the partnerships and possibilities that lie ahead — the greater independence, confidence, participation, connection and companionship these dogs will bring to the lives of the people they serve.

And to everyone who has helped them reach this wonderful day — thank you.

Congratulations once again to all our graduates and to the entire Guide Dogs Tasmania family.

Thank you.