AUDIT TASMANIA
RECEPTION TO MARK THE BICENTENARY OF PUBLIC SECTOR AUDITING IN TASMANIA
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2026

Good evening, everyone, and a very warm welcome to Government House.

It is a pleasure to have you all here this evening as we come together to celebrate a remarkable milestone — the bicentenary of public sector auditing in Tasmania.

I'd 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, its waterways and its communities. I feel very fortunate to call Tasmania home, and I acknowledge and respect that enduring connection to this land.

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

Tonight is an opportunity not only to celebrate 200 years of public sector auditing in Tasmania, but also to recognise the people, past and present, who have helped shape an institution that has stood the test of time and continues to play such an important role in the oversight and accountability of our public sector.

Today, Audit Tasmania is a thriving office, with more than 70 employees, making it the largest audit practice in Tasmania.

I was particularly pleased to learn just how well the office reflects the diversity and character of our State. More than half of its staff were born overseas and have since made Tasmania their home. It is also an organisation that provides valuable opportunities for the next generation of auditors, with an average staff age of just 34 years[1].

So, while the office has a remarkable 200-year history, it clearly has a very bright future ahead of it.

And speaking of bright, it was great to see the Tasman Bridge illuminated in green to mark this milestone. The green audit pen has been a familiar symbol of the audit profession, representing independence, scrutiny and accountability that underpin public sector auditing. It was a wonderful way to celebrate this milestone and recognise the important contribution of everyone who continues to uphold the values of this important but not widely recognised profession.

As many of you would know, Audit Tasmania undertakes more than 120 audits of large and small State entities each year and tables around 12 reports annually, all aimed at strengthening public sector performance, transparency and accountability.

That is a substantial body of work, and an enormous responsibility — one that is carried out year after year, often without much public fanfare, but with considerable importance to the Tasmanian community.

[1] Notes provided by AG office

It is interesting to reflect on just how much has changed over those 200 years. I suspect Tasmania's first Auditor-General, GTWB Boyes, would barely recognise today's public sector — its size, structures, systems, operations and, of course, the technology and tools now available to auditors.

Mr Boyes was appointed as Civil Auditor on this very day, 25 November 1826.

The establishment of the position followed a rather extraordinary financial scandal involving the then Tasmanian Naval Officer, who was responsible for collecting duties and paying expenses from the Police Fund.

It was discovered that the Naval Officer, together with his clerk, had embezzled £8,388 and 4 shillings — the equivalent of approximately $1.8 million in today's dollars[2]. Quite a considerable sum, by any measure!

The scandal prompted the then Lieutenant-Governor to observe that there appeared to be "no check whatsoever on the accounts".

Concerned that previous auditing arrangements had been operating out of Sydney, the Lieutenant-Governor decided that Tasmania needed its own independent oversight. And so, on 25 November 1826, the Office of Auditor of Civil Accounts was established.

In effect, this was the beginning of the Auditor-General's office in Tasmania. The title became Colonial Auditor in 1853 and, finally, Auditor-General in 1888.

Over the past two centuries, there have been 19 Auditors-General in Tasmania — an average tenure of just over 11 years.

[2] https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bromley-edward-foord-1829 accessed 18 Nov 26

Mr Boyes himself holds the record, having served for an extraordinary 27 years[3]. That's certainly a record that would be difficult to beat, although perhaps someone in the room tonight might have ambitions in that direction!

While so much has changed in our public sector and in society more broadly, what is striking is how little the fundamental purpose of the Auditor-General's office has changed.

The office was born out of a need to address financial misconduct, strengthen oversight of public money and establish greater confidence in the integrity of government.

Those principles remain just as important today.

Through its financial and performance audits, the Auditor-General continues to provide independent oversight and assurance to the Parliament of Tasmania and, importantly, to the people of Tasmania.

It is work that goes to the heart of good public administration. It helps ensure that public resources are used responsibly, that government is accountable for its decisions and that the community can have confidence in the institutions that serve it.

And while much of this work happens behind the scenes, its value should never be underestimated.

To everyone here tonight who has been part of Audit Tasmania over the years — whether you are currently working in the office, have contributed to it in the past, or have supported its work in other ways — I hope you take great pride in being part of this remarkable 200-year story.

[3] https://audit.tas.gov.au/our-history/ accessed 18 Nov 26

Institutions endure because of the people who give them purpose, commitment and energy. Tonight is very much an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate your contribution.

Two hundred years is a wonderful milestone, and one well worth celebrating.

So, thank you for being here and for being part of this special occasion.

Please enjoy the reception, take the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and friends, perhaps share a few stories from the office over the years, and enjoy your visit to Tasmania's beautiful Government House.

I look forward to speaking with you more informally as we share the evening together.

Thank you, and please enjoy the celebration.