**CHURCHILL FELLOWS ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA INC**
**PRESENTATION OF THE 2026 CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIPS**
**FOR TASMANIA ON BEHALF OF THE**
**WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST**
**REMARKS BY**
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE WELLS**
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**
**GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER 2026**

Good evening and a very warm welcome to you all to Government House as we celebrate the 2026 Churchill Fellows.

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 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.

This reception is particularly special for me. Over the last 4 – 5 years I have been privileged to be welcomed into the Churchill family through Rob's role as the Tasmanian Chair of the Selection Committee and as a National Board Director. I do not use the word family lightly, as that it is truly what the Churchill Fellowship represents.

A couple of years ago, Rob and I had the privilege of meeting Jeremy Soames, Sir Winston's grandson, and then of visiting Chartwell. Standing in the home where so much of that remarkable life was lived, it was hard not to reflect on the memorial Sir Winston chose for himself, the one that brings us together this evening.

It is a story worth retelling. After the Second World War, honours poured in from all over the world, and statues and buildings were raised in his name. In 1962, the Duke of Edinburgh asked Sir Winston what form of memorial he would like to be remembered by.

Perhaps typical of the man, the idea of something very different pleased him very much. He suggested something along the lines of the Rhodes Scholarships, but open to all people with a passion for a particular subject and on a far wider basis and without the requirement for academia.

And so, the idea of travelling Fellowships was born: a chance for people from all walks of life to travel overseas, to meet international experts, to learn and then bring the knowledge home and share it with their community.

The Australian chapter of that story is one we should never tire of telling. The plans were kept secret at Lady Churchill's request, so that Sir Winston would not be troubled in his declining years by talk of what would follow his death. Planning carried on quietly under the code name Operation G.

G for Gratitude.

When Sir Winston died on the 24th of January 1965, a nationwide appeal was launched immediately by Sir Robert Menzies. Just four weeks after his funeral, on Sunday the 28th of February, members of the Returned Services League went door to door across the country in what remains the greatest one-day doorknock in Australian history. That single day raised 911,000 pounds. With the support of governments, companies and individuals, the appeal went on to more than double its target. That's nearly $4 million dollars in 1965!

The code name for the project, Gratitude, is a good word to hold on to this evening. A nation said thank you to one man and chose to do it by investing in its own people.

Since 1965, the Trust has awarded more than 4,500 Fellowships. There are no prescribed qualifications. Fellows come from every walk of life, with projects as varied as you could imagine and I am always completely stunned by the breadth of diversity in the projects undertaken.

So, to our 2026 Tasmanian Fellows, congratulations. You will travel widely, meet the people doing work that you care about and you will be able to learn from them. And then you will bring your learning home. That second part matters just as much as the first. The Trust's motto says it plainly: learn globally, inspire locally.

Tasmanians have always understood this. We are an island at the edge of the world, but we have never thought small. We know that good ideas travel, and that the best of them are the ones brought home and put to work in our own communities.

I want to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, its Board and its team, for supporting Fellows before, during and after their travels. To every member of the Tasmanian Selection Committee, who give their time and their judgement in an honorary capacity, thank you. And to the families, friends, employers and mentors who have backed these Fellows, and who will keep things running while they are away, thank you too.

Sir Winston asked for a memorial that would send people out into the world to learn. You are living proof that it works. Congratulations again, and I look forward to hearing what you bring home.

Please enjoy the evening. Thank you.