Good morning. I am delighted to be here today to address you on this special occasion of the 2016 Burnie Australia Day Awards and Citizenship ceremonies.

I acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as the traditional and original owners, and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather today and acknowledge Elders – past and present. Today of all days, the 26 January, this acknowledgment of country is important.

May I begin by adding my congratulations to those of you who have become citizens here today. It’s a great honour for you personally and also a great honour for Australia to have immigrants making the pledge of commitment to our country.

This is my first official Australia Day event as Governor of Tasmania and so it is an auspicious one for my husband Dick and me. There does seem to be some North-Western lure though, because our first ever extended visit was to the Cradle Coast region in March last year; and then just our third official municipal visit – out of a potential 29 over my five-year term of office – was to the Burnie City Council, in June last year.

Accordingly I wish to thank Alderman Sandra French AM, in her capacity as the Chairman of the Council’s Australia Day Special Committee, for inviting me to address you today. And I warmly acknowledge Mayor Anita Dow, and her fellow Burnie City Council Aldermen. And, of course, all of you who are guests here in the Burnie Arts and Function Centre.

Despite January 26, 1788 being well over two centuries ago, the designation of 26th January as Australia Day and a national holiday is in historical terms very recent - it dates back only to 1994, although it was back in 1935 that the States and territories decided to use the name to mark the date.

As reported in the Burnie Advocate of Tuesday 16 July 1935, and I quote:
“Following a strong request from the ANA [the Australian Natives’ Association], the Commonwealth Government has decided to recognize January 26, the anniversary of the arrival of Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788, as Australia Day. Hitherto this holiday has been termed Foundation Day. Instructions are to be issued by the Government that in future this holiday shall be known as Australia Day, to give it pride of place in historical importance.”

But it wasn’t that cut and dried – not up here at any rate. According to the Examiner newspaper of Wednesday 30 October 1935, and again I quote:

“The Chief Secretary Mr. T. d’Alton has given attention to the question of the observance of Australia Day as a result of representations made by North-West coastal interests. Monday, January 27, will be observed as a holiday at Latrobe, Devonport, Ulverstone, Penguin, Burnie, Wynyard, Smithton, Stanley, Waratah and Sheffield ... at Launceston and on the North-East coast and at Deloraine, Longford, Westbury, and Campbell Town, January 20 will be observed as the Australia Day holiday, while this arrangement will also apply to Queenstown and Strahan. As regards Oatlands and places south of that township, the Hobart Regatta Day on February 4 will as usual be kept as the Australia Day holiday.”

So it was not until 1994 that 26th January was consistently marked by a public holiday on that day by all states and territories. The selection of that date, the date in 1788 when Captain Arthur Phillip, commander of the First Fleet of eleven convict ships from Great Britain, arrived at Sydney Cove, is both controversial and full of contradictions. The raising of the Union Jack symbolized British occupation of the eastern half of the continent claimed by Captain James Cook on 22 August in 1770. But from the Aboriginal perspective the date symbolizes invasion of a country that had been occupied by them for at least 40 thousand years. So for Aborigines it is Invasion Day – or Shame Day, a day which marks the invasion of Australia and dispossession of Aborigines. For this reason there has been an ongoing debate about changing the date to a more suitable one. On Australia Day last year, Michael Mansell argued that if, as many argue, Australia Day is not celebrating the arrival of the First Fleet, there should be no problem with changing the date. A number of alternatives have been suggested including the anniversary of the Eureka Stockade (3rd

1 http://www.australiaday.org.au/australia-day/history/timeline/
2 Michael Mansell, ‘Four Reasons to Change the Date of Australia Day, 26th January 2015.
December), ANZAC Day, 1\textsuperscript{st} January, the day when Federal Parliament first sat. If we were to change the date – then 3rd June may be a good choice – the day on which the High Court handed down the \textit{Mabo decision}, the case that decided that the principle of \textit{terra nullius}, the land belongs to no one, did not apply to Australia and should not have been applied by the British settlers.

I have also said that the date of arrival of the First Fleet is full of contradictions. For the convicts of the First Fleet it could not have been a happy day. Whilst they were no doubt relieved to have arrived having survived the appalling conditions of the journey below deck for almost 9 months, the 26\textsuperscript{th} January marked the establishment of a penal colony where they were to suffer dreadful human rights violations. And yet for many of these convicts arrival at Sydney Cove offered the chance of a new start. Transportation and the convict system can be viewed as a successful experiment in re-integration - Australian convicts and their children in general turned away from crime. The majority story is one of reintegration into respectable society. Dick is directly descended from Elizabeth Bruce, a female convict transported to New South Wales on the Lady Penhryn, one of ships of first Fleet. Elizabeth exemplifies the success of convicts who made the transition to respectability and economic success in Australia.

She was transferred from \textit{Sydney Cove} to Norfolk Island in 1788 where she was flogged for letting the pigs out (25 lashes) and stealing a hen (75 lashes). At the end of her term of transportation, she chose to stay in New South Wales and, with her former convict husband, was granted land. When the Norfolk Island settlement was closed and settlers transferred to Van Diemen’s Land in 1808, she and her second husband, a convict from the Second Fleet, were granted land at Kempton where they became successful farmers and respected members of the community. So for convicts despite the perils of transportation, the strangeness and dislocation of a new land, there was hope, a stake in the future and some prospect of fair procedures to deal with present injustices. Transportation for Elizabeth Bruce, Francis Flexmore and their family provided an opportunity to turn away from a life of crime.

This is not to say that transportation was a good thing. Many convicts were treated appallingly harshly, many died before they even arrived in Australia. And ‘the more fundamental evil’, in John Braithwaite’s words, was that ‘the
crimes of the convicted were expiated through the theft of an entire continent from its rightful owners’. ³

In 1808, the year Elizabeth and Francis moved to Van Diemen’s Land, the emancipated convicts in Sydney first used 26th January to celebrate the land they lived in and their survival.⁴ The parties grew in size and emancipists and their children infused them with a political edge campaigning to have the same rights as free British immigrants.⁵

For me Australia Day celebrates the egalitarian politics that motivated the early celebrations of Foundation Day by the emancipists. I would like to acknowledge the tragedy of the invasion of Australia and the dispossession of Aborigines and at the same time celebrate the fact that Australia is home and that we are as a nation should strive to be united by the desire to welcome those who want to call Australia home. Australia has welcomed seven million migrants since 1945, demonstrating that the vast majority of us have an expansive idea of who can be included among all Australians.⁶

Thank you. Congratulations again to all those who have become Australian citizens today and to those who have and are about to receive Australia Day awards. And finally I would like to express thanks to all the fire fighters who have been working so hard these last weeks and days to keep us safe and to preserve our forests and wilderness.

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⁵ Above, n 4.