

**COUNCIL OF UNITED COMMONWEALTH SOCIETIES OF TASMANIA LUNCHEON
TO CELEBRATE THE QUEEN'S 90th BIRTHDAY
TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2016**

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for inviting Dick and me to once again attend your luncheon to celebrate the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia and to propose a toast to the health of Her Majesty.

Last year we were celebrating not only the Queen's birthday but also the fact that it was the year which she became the longest serving British Monarch, surpassing the reign of her great-great grandmother Queen Victoria – during whose reign our Government House was built.

This year is again special because it is Her Majesty's 90th birthday and we are very honoured to be asked to join you all today. And this year at Government House we held two very special concerts on the 8th and 9th June to mark and to celebrate Her Majesty's official birthday.

The impetus for this dates back almost a year, to July 2015 when I received a letter from the Deputy Private Secretary to The Queen, Edward Young. That letter advised me of a charitable event being planned in London to mark her 90th Birthday, to be called The Patron's Lunch.

As some of you no doubt know, that event was held on Sunday 12th of June in The Mall in St James Park, London. Some ten thousand guests attended. Her Majesty was joined by the Duke of Edinburgh and other members of the Royal Family to celebrate the occasion – with all proceeds from the event being distributed among selected charities of which Her Majesty is patron. The lunch was the grand finale to a weekend of celebrations.

In his letter Edward Young raised the possibility of similar events across the Commonwealth to provide a platform for charitable fundraising.

Hence the two concerts at Government House. All proceeds raised from the ticket sales – including generous donations from Tasmanians unable to attend – have now been given to Foodbank Tasmania, of which organisation I am Patron.

Foodbank Tasmania was chosen as the fundraising recipient because it has a very broad reach across Tasmania, supplying food to over 200 Tasmanian

welfare agencies, as well as running a significant School Breakfast Program. Foodbank has also been involved in flood relief work and has provided much needed necessities to those affected by the recent floods across the north of our State.

It was a wonderful gesture for The Queen to make her birthday the occasion for fundraising charity event. We were very pleased to be able to take up the challenge to do a similar thing. The other bonus of the concert idea was that we commissioned some young Tasmanian composers to write a piece for the concert. Dean Stevenson and his colleagues Kelly Ottaway and Julius Schwing composed *Variations on God Save the Queen* which was performed by a group of musicians, brass, strings, piano and guitar.

I would now like to tell you a little about our visit to see the Queen at Buckingham Palace early last October just after she had returned from her summer holiday at Balmoral. Angus from the Australian High Commission picked us up and drove us to the Palace through the gates and then through the grand entrance into a courtyard where there were two carriages and horses that had conveyed the ambassadors from Yemen and Malawi to the Palace. The Queen later explained that Ambassadors are given a carriage with two horses and High Commissioners four.

We were greeted by an equerry with a sword and a charming lady-in-waiting. We were then escorted to the beautiful Bow Room for our turn to be received. The Bow Room is so called because of its beautiful bow window which overlooks a large garden. It is now used as the waiting room for people before being received for their audience with Her Majesty.

Once the page opened the door (the page of privy purse door), we entered: three steps forward, then curtsey or bow your head and then walk towards her. Do not offer your hand unless she offered hers, which she did. She was very warm and easy and amazingly sharp. I did not have a chance to look around the room; I was too focused on the Queen. No corgies were in sight. She was wearing a pink woolen suit pinned with a diamond the size of a small egg hanging from a large square cut diamond. (Later research revealed that this was the Cullinan diamonds III and IV, which are said to be called Granny's chips by The Queen. The pear cut stone was originally in Queen Mary's coronation crown. The Queen gave us two new pictures, one of herself and one of Prince Phillip, in very nice leather frames. She said that they were for the piano at Government House.

During our briefing in the Bow Room, we were advised to relax and not be concerned if we made an error in relation to the instructions but to enjoy the visit. Enjoy it we did and emerged full of admiration for the way in which Her Majesty performs her duties with such charm and apparent pleasure.

It is indeed an honour for me to ask you to now join in a toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia.

“The Queen.”

Thank you.