

**FROM THE SHADOWS INC FEMALE CONVICT STATUE UNVEILING  
SPEECH BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
CASCADES FEMALE FACTORY, SUNDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2022**

Good morning and thank you Bob (Gordon, introduced HE).

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

May I acknowledge among our many guests the Ambassador of Ireland, His Excellency Mr Tim Mawe, and Ms Patricia McCarthy. They have travelled to Tasmania for the two unveilings today. We are delighted to be hosting them at Government House.

We are also delighted to be hosting sculptor, Rowan Gillespie. Government House this week has a lovely and lively Irish charm about it, and the many harp paintings on the Dining Room ceiling have been appreciated.

The importance of these statues commemorating Irish female convicts and their children is of great cultural significance to Tasmania, and to Ireland. The story of their creation is fascinating, as much as it is poignant and a reminder of suffering and stoicism.

Dianne Snowden, Secretary of the From the Shadows Project team has noted that Rowan Gillespie has been described as “one of the most eloquent contemporary masters of Irish sculpture”, and that “historical authenticity is fundamental to his work.”<sup>1</sup>

Rowan, on behalf of all Tasmanians, we are all grateful; we thank you for all your hard work over these years to create these sublime, haunting and mysterious figures.

May we acknowledge John Kelly in this story. He was the owner of the State Cinema – and carried out amazing work to restore that treasure to its full glory. He visited Dublin, where he saw and admired Rowan Gillespie’s 1997 group of ‘Famine Statues’ at the Customs House Quay in Dublin. These statues commemorate the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century Great Irish Famine.

John envisaged statues of their kind in Hobart. And he joined our Lord Mayor in discussing the possibility with sculptor Rowan Gillespie.

So, years later it was that in October 2017 Rowan's first four statues were jointly unveiled at Hobart waterfront MACq 01 by our previous Governor Kate Warner and the President of Ireland, Mr Michael Higgins. They are called the Footsteps Towards Freedom statues.

In February 2021, Kate Warner unveiled this statue [HE gestures to it].

This morning, this part of the magnificent artistic journey of Rowan Gillespie and his many partners is almost concluded.

The From the Shadows Project Team was instituted to continue on the Footsteps Towards Freedom installations. The Team aimed to raise funds for four more statues: these two female convicts; and two children, a boy and a girl, to be unveiled this afternoon at the Orphan Schools in New Town.<sup>2</sup>

Our many congratulations to the Project Team: Bob Gordon, President, Dianne Snowden, Secretary; and Ros Escott, Lorraine Davidson, Darryl Massie, Jennifer Fitzpatrick, David Boon, and Sandra Lo.<sup>3</sup>

Their fundraising efforts were boosted with a federal grant secured by Andrew Wilkie MP for Clark. This has been much appreciated, so thank you Andrew.

We also acknowledge the support of the State and Federal parliamentary representatives throughout the process. As Bob has mentioned, we have with us the Honourable Elise Archer, Minister for the Arts; the Honourable Nic Street, Minister for Heritage; and Senator Eric Abetz, Senator for Tasmania.

May I also acknowledge the input of the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority. In 2010 through its efforts, the Authority secured for this Cascades Female Factory Historic Site, World Heritage Listing as one of eleven Australian historic convict sites.<sup>4</sup>

I should add other connections of Government House with the statues. The statue, Elizabeth, is the likeness of Emily Warner, daughter of Kate and Dick Warner.

I have also discovered that our head gardener, Tara Edmondson, has an ancestor five generations back, Jane Castings, who was transported for seven years for receiving stolen cheese. Whilst at the Female Factory, she gave birth to a daughter, who survived the bleak conditions.

I shall conclude and remind us why we are here today with a quote from a contemporary recollection of this place:

“Hobart Town is the capital of Van Diemen’s Land and is beautifully situated on the banks of an estuary called the Derwent ...There is in Hobart Town a spacious House of Correction for females. It is called the Factory, and contained at that time about two hundred prisoners. They were employed in picking and spinning wool, and in washing for the Hospital Orphan School and other institutions. The women were dressed in a prison garb, and had their hair cut close, which they naturally considered a grievous infliction of tyranny.

“When they misbehaved themselves they were put into solitary confinement, and I heard that many of them had gone raving mad while enduring that horrible mental torture.”<sup>5</sup>

Today as we look upon Rowan Gillespie’s work, we should also reflect upon their suffering.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Forty South magazine 29 July 2021, article by Dianne Snowden: [Shaping history: Rowan Gillespie’s statues \(fortysouth.com.au\)](https://fortysouth.com.au), accessed 24 February 2022.

<sup>2</sup> <https://fromtheshadows.org.au/>, accessed 24 February 2022.

<sup>3</sup> [The Project Team \(fromtheshadows.org.au\)](https://fromtheshadows.org.au/), accessed 24 February 2022.

<sup>4</sup> [Heritage Management - Cascades Female Factory](#), accessed 24 February 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Mudgee Guardian and North-Western Representative (NSW), Thursday 10 October 201 page 5.