

HOBART OUT TENNIS CLUB
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SUNDAY 1 MAY 2022

Good morning and a warm welcome to this 25th anniversary event to mark and celebrate the repeal of Tasmania's anti-homosexual law.

I begin by paying 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.

This is an important and historic anniversary. I offer my warmest congratulations to Hendry Lukman, President of the Hobart Out Tennis Club, and to everyone here. We are also pleased that you approached Government House to hold your anniversary event here.

This is an important milestone. Quite apart from the injustice and hurt done to so many individuals and groups over such a long time, the repeal of our state's anti-gay legislation also had an impact on our community and our parliamentary structure. I quote:

"Since 1991, the Legislative Council had blocked law reform despite the House of Assembly having voted to repeal the laws. The lesbian and gay rights movement's success in mobilising community opposition to the laws encouraged calls for the undemocratic and out of touch upper house to be abolished."¹ End quote.

When we consider our Legislative Council was established in 1825, the call for its abolition was significant. Today of course the Legislative Council remains an integral part of our thriving parliamentary democracy.

The impact of repeal legislation was equally significant: on Thursday 1 May 1997 our State flicked the switch from Australia's most oppressive anti-gay law to anti-discrimination legislation that is the most comprehensive in the nation and provides the strongest protections for LGBTIQ+ people.

¹ *Green Left*, issue 273, 7 May 1997, [Tasmania decriminalises homosexuality | Green Left](#), accessed 22 April 2022.

On Friday 18 December 1998, our then Governor Sir Guy Green gave Royal Assent to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*. The Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and intersex status as well as sexual orientation.

Interestingly, the Bill would have been signed on the oval table in the Governor's Study. This was the original Legislative Council table, used first during Governor Sir George Arthur's time.

We should acknowledge that the early debates in the Legislative Council in the 1990s were often very hurtful. As one person said, having listened to debate in the Parliamentary Gallery: "We could do nothing but weep as the Legislative Council tore our lives to shreds."²

Five years ago, on the twentieth anniversary of repeal, the Tasmanian Government officially apologised. That was historic and just. The Acting Attorney-General Matthew Groom said, in Parliament: "We hope those affected will accept our acknowledgement that those laws were wrong."³

The then Premier Will Hodgman declared: "It is our view that the broader Tasmanian community would believe that people should never have been charged or convicted in the first place, even if it was thought at the time it was the right thing to do, it was not."⁴

Labor leader the Honourable Rebecca White asserted: "The harm caused by these laws is unfathomable, the scars caused by these laws are still visible and the memory of these laws is still hurtful."

Greens leader Cassy O'Connor recorded: "To every Tasmanian who with this [criminal] stain on their record, [who] was forced to leave this island, who has suffered ever since ... we need to acknowledge... This apology doesn't change the history, but what it does do is make it very clear to those who suffered, those who have fought so hard for change, that the Tasmanian Parliament recognises a terrible historical wrong."

Today, on this twenty-fifth anniversary, as your 29th Governor, I acknowledge and endorse the spirit and words of each of these parliamentary leaders. I also

² M Morriss, *The Pink Triangle: the gay law reform debate in Tasmania* (UNSW Press, Sydney, 1996), quoted in <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AUJHRights/2001/6.html> (endnote 90), accessed 22 April 2022.

³ ABC News Thursday 13 April 2017 [Tasmanian Government apologises for criminalisation of gay sexual acts - ABC News](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-04-13/tasmanian-government-apologises-for-criminalisation-of-gay-sexual-acts) accessed 22 April 2022.

⁴ Ibid.

acknowledge you and your many friends for your courage, tenacity and patience to change the legislation. Above all, we thank you for your faith that a decent society would eventually prevail over its prejudices.

Now it only remains for me to say: enjoy every serve and volley!

Thank you.

[David invites Rodney Croome to respond]

Thank you.