

CONSULAR CORPS OF TASMANIA
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 28 JUNE 2022

Good evening and welcome to Government House for this Tasmanian Consular Corps reception.

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 evening we have no less than nineteen countries formally represented; this, therefore is a significant gathering and I thank Damon Thomas, new Dean of our Consular Corps in Tasmania for proposing it. May I also mention Dr Tim Ault, DFAT State Office Director, and recognise your role in promoting and protecting Australia's interests in these challenging international times.¹

I understand that it is a tradition for a new Governor to host a welcome to the Consular Corps and I am very pleased to be doing so. I also understand that as a group of 26, currently, that you get together fairly regularly.

It was Sir James Plimsoll, former diplomat, and Tasmanian Governor, who in the 1980s introduced the initiative of inviting visiting Ambassadors and High Commissioners to stay at Government House. That of course has long since become a tradition, unique to Tasmania and much appreciated by both visitors, host organisations and our Consular Corps.

When I was sworn-in to office in June last year, we were emerging from the peak of the Covid lockdowns. As you all know, official diplomatic visits had been discontinued since 2019. So, it's really pleasing to once again be able to welcome your Ambassadors and High Commissioners to Tasmania. We all appreciate the cultural, political, educational and economic benefits accruing from these visits.

May I take this opportunity to thank each of you for your work as Honorary Consuls. We are all well aware that during these visits, your schedules are very busy. Your consular hospitality and efficiency in making them work so well is a great credit to you and to Tasmania.

¹ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/>, accessed 26 June 2022.

We have enjoyed our support hosting roles, to your consular visits. I thought I would present the roll call to date:

- August 2021 Ambassador of Sweden, Henrik Cederin and Alexandra Cederin
- December 2021 Consul-General of the People's Republic of China, Mr Long Zhou, who attended the concurrent Fujian Province reception and also made a day visit.
- February this year Ambassador of Ireland, Timothy Mawe and Patricia McCarthy, who amongst other opportunities, unveiled the evocative female convict sculptures of Rowan Gillespie
- Also, an event in the Ball Room to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Australia
- March, US Consul General, Kathleen Lively
- April was a very full timetable with the:
 - Ambassador of Norway, Paul Larsen
 - Ambassador of Germany, Dr Thomas Fitschen
 - High Commissioner for New Zealand, Dame Annette King
 - Ambassador of Finland, Satu Mattila-Budich and Martin Budich
 - And, British Consul General in Melbourne, Stephen Lysaght
- May, a telephone link with Consul General of the People's Republic of China, Mr Long Zhou, and
 - Ambassador of France, Jean-Pierre Thébault
- June, Ambassador of Austria Wolfgang Strohmayer and Natalie Strohmayer and their son Lukas.

I hope that each visit has been constructive in its own way. But let me provide two anecdotes on the lighter side.

Last August, I discovered that His Excellency Henrik Cederin was a keen tennis player. I invited him to play a game of real tennis, of which he had never heard, at our Davey Street court. As you may expect, the Ambassador had travelled to Tasmania without bringing sports gear, and so we purchased for him shorts, t-shirt and tennis shoes – all in the blue and yellow colours of Sweden!

The gear is still here and has only been worn once, so, Cara [Hawkins] as the brand-new Honorary Consul, perhaps you can suggest the next Swedish Ambassador also use them for something!

More recently, after a long discussion on the teaching of French in schools, His Excellency Jean-Pierre Thébault took a relaxing walk around our paddocks and French Garden. He surprised us by identifying the name of every single variety of mushroom, advising which were edible and which not, and how best

to cook the edible ones! And as you would expect, His Excellency handled very diplomatically a mention of AUKUS by one of our guests.

May I conclude with and again mention the economic significance to Tasmania of the official visits. We always hold Formal Dinners and try to invite a range of guests to fit with our visitors, members of Parliament, companies with business relationships with the country, as well as Tasmanians from around our State – in education, the arts, social work, churches, multicultural bodies, patronages, and so on.

Feedback from these visiting diplomats indicates that they enjoy meeting a wide variety of Tasmanians, and guests appreciate and enjoy the opportunity to meet the Consular representative.

It is important to take every opportunity to generate goodwill with our visitors in these very uncertain global times, so we look forward to continuing our hospitality which is currently occurring on a monthly basis.

May I again thank each of you for your role as an Honorary Consul. I thank you for the important work you do in promoting Tasmania and, in turn, Australia – and for helping to ensure that we are a respected and trusted country on the world stage.

Now, please enjoy the reception.

Thank you.