

**KICKSTART ARTS CENTRE — ‘A BIG DAY OF POSITIVE CHANGE’
WALKOUT STEP LAUNCH AND REPURPOSING CEREMONY OF
THE QUEEN’S ORPHAN SCHOOL FOR BOYS
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
ST JOHN’S PARK, NEW TOWN, SATURDAY 28 MAY 2022**

Thank you, David [Noonan, introduced HE].

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.

I shall return to this Acknowledgement shortly.

I congratulate Jami Bladel and Richard Bladel for your unfailing efforts and determination over many years, revitalising this entire precinct. You now give us a most memorable Big Day of Positive Change, with the repurposing of the former Queen’s School for Orphan Boys into the Kickstart Arts Centre (North) as an arts and wellbeing centre.

May I also recognise your many colleagues at Kickstart who have all pitched in with equal dedication. We thank you too – Chair Michael Fortescue, your Board of Management, and all the Kickstart staff. Many congratulations as well to Cheryl Mundy and Marcus Tatton.

If we take 1992 as your starting year, with the Arts in Working Life program of Jock MacQueenie, then this is your 30th anniversary. What a proud and significant way to celebrate it, with this landmark initiative realised.

Public art is not only significant for its aesthetic appeal but also in its healing processes, particularly when words may not be adequate to express deep feelings. This afternoon has also been gracefully and beautifully uplifted by the music of Madelena, and the pakana kanaplila dancers; this will be continued soon by Dewayne Everettsmith and then by Boil Up.

As Governor, I am proud to be part of A Big Day of Positive Change. It is a privilege to be part of these proceedings.

May I return now to my opening Acknowledgement in which I recognised “a history of truth”, in respect of our first peoples. The painful truth is that the Lieutenant-Governors of Van Diemen’s Land and the early Governors of Tasmania dismissed the legitimate, profound and enduring sense of injustice of our island’s first peoples, with settlement occurring without treaties or any recognition of Aboriginal property rights.¹

Many Aboriginal children were stolen from their parents and treated with outright cruelty here in this orphanage. The pain of children being separated from their families endures and healing continues today.

We cannot unwrite that history but as a society we must acknowledge and learn from it.

We know that efforts are now being made at both State and Federal levels to redress the pain and injustice that continues to resonate. Our new Prime Minister, in his election victory speech declared a “full commitment” to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This Statement is a gracious and inclusive offer to all Australians to build a better future together. I too stand for a better future, one that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

So, the repurposing of this building situated on Crown Land and built by Lieutenant Governor Arthur, is an important ceremony for recognition of positive change, of continuing conversations and healing through art and culture. This repurposed place is telling Aboriginal stories, as we can see with the magnificent Walkout Step.

The Kickstart precinct is also a thriving place of welcome for Tasmanians newly arrived from many other countries and other cultures.

In conclusion, many congratulations again to Jami and Richard and all your colleagues and friends who continue to ensure that Kickstart Arts lives at the forefront of our positive change.

Thank you.

¹ Tongerlongeter Henry Reynolds “& Nicholas Clements Newsouth Publishing 2021 pages 2142-214