

**THE MALAYALEE ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA INC**  
**ONAM 2022**  
**SPEECH BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC,**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**HOBART CITY HALL, SUNDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Good morning and thank you all for your invitation to share in this wonderful Onam festival celebration with you.

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

May I acknowledge:

- The Honourable Elise Archer MP, Attorney-General;
- The Honourable Nic Street MP, Minister for Community Services and Development; Hospitality and Events; Sport and Recreation;
- Councillor Anna Reynolds, the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Hobart;
- The Honourable Meg Webb MLC;
- Ms Ruby Joshy, President Malayalee Association of Tasmania.

May I say as Governor, on behalf of all Tasmanians, that sharing a joyful cultural celebration such as this is most welcome. Onam is a harvest festival that reminds us of the decency of human nature in a world that is too often divisive. The ten days of the Kerala Onam Festival may be said to epitomise our better natures, because mythical King Mahabali, the inspiration for the festival, was said to be “kind-hearted and much-loved”.<sup>1</sup>

We are fortunate living here in this peaceful island of Tasmania, with our small yet increasingly diverse multicultural population. Tasmania is one of the world’s larger islands – almost exactly the same geographic size as Kerala’s southern neighbour Sri Lanka, though Sri Lanka has forty times our population. We are

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<sup>1</sup> [Onam 2020: History, significance and all that you need to know about the harvest festival - Hindustan Times](#), accessed 2 September 2022.

blessed with excellent productivity, pristine wilderness and a robust system of democracy.

The many aspects of the Onam festival are most impressive, so too that it is a truly international festival, being celebrated in many places over ten days, those days being: Atham; Chithira; Chothi; Vishakam; Anizham; Thriketta; Moolam; Pooradam; Uthradom; and Thiruvonam.

As I mentioned, Onam is a harvest festival, culminating with the great vegetarian feast. Kerala's south Indian vegetarian-vegan cuisine is very healthy – and that's reason for celebration too. Kerala is also home of the world's favourite spice, the original black pepper – *Piper nigrum* – which evolved with the unique influence of the hot, wet monsoonal climate of the Arabian Sea and the evergreen forests of Kerala's Western Ghats.

I wonder whether there is any link of Kerala's piper nigrum with our rare Tasmanian Mountain Pepper Berry, native to our wilderness. I shall finish with that peppery conundrum!

So, to Ruby Joshy, President of the Malayalee Association of Tasmania, to all your festival colleagues, organisers and supporters, my warmest congratulations on this fabulous Onam festival, here in Tasmania.

Thank you.