

**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Good evening and I welcome you all to Government House and to this reception to acknowledge new Fellows of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in Tasmania.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and 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 among us;

- Dr Tim Jackson, RACGP national Board Member and Tasmania Council Chair,
- fellow Council office bearers and members, and
- office staff of RACGP Tasmania.

I warmly congratulate all the new Fellows of the 2021-22 cohort of our Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in Tasmania. My husband, Don, joins in my congratulations. As some of you may know, Don has had a long career working in health law and medical research ethics.

In earlier correspondence relating to this reception, Dr Jackson noted the “rigorous scientific medical training” required for entry into general practice as a relationship-based medical speciality.¹

Your commitment, as early career GPs, to your lengthy additional study and examinations is professional development of the highest order.

¹ Dr Tim Jackson 31 March 2022 letter of request to David Owen.

Don and I have been privileged to host a number of medical-related events here this year. Each event reaffirms the critically important nature of your profession, right across our social spectrum.

In March we hosted a reception to mark the 50th anniversary of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Australia.

In June we hosted the presentation of the 2022 Australian Society for Medical Research Week awards for Tasmanian recipients.

And, last month Don chaired a meeting of panellists for our Royal Hobart Hospital Research Foundation Research Excellence Dinner.

So, I invite you all to imagine how many medical-related functions have been held in this historic building. I shall give you just two examples, dating back to the early part of the twentieth century. I hope you find them interesting as their recollections of your profession a century ago – when, of course, advances in medicine were just as cutting-edge, as they are today.

The first example was in February 1902. The fourth triennial Intercolonial Medical Congress was held in our Hobart Town Hall and opened by then Governor, Sir Arthur Havelock. The presidential – that is, the keynote – address was on the etiology of typhoid fever.

Topics included disposal of sewage (a key factor in eliminating typhoid fever), up-to-date pathology, therapeutics, cancer, eye, ear and throat surgery, midwifery, public health, quarantine, the successful uses of x-rays in surgical cases, and, quote, “with the aid of lantern slides, the exhibiting of the micro-organisms of numerous diseases [such as diphtheria, tuberculosis, plague, leprosy, anthrax and tick fever] being very successful enlargements of micro-photographs”.²

During the course of the Congress, Sir Arthur and Lady Anne Havelock hosted delegates, here in the Drawing room, also in the Ball Room and Conservatory – then an open balcony. An outdoors garden party had been planned, but Hobart rain put paid to that. According to a contemporary newspaper, the guests enjoyed, quote, “pleasant chat, varied by the dainty afternoon refreshments”.³

My apology, but we don’t do “dainty” these days! – but our canapes, I assume, are certainly healthy.

² The Mercury, Friday 21 February 1902 page 4.

³ Tasmanian Mail, 1 March 1902 page 9.

The second example was in 1934. The fourth session of the Australasian Medical Congress – as it was renamed – met in Hobart with some 350 delegates attending. Their families travelled with them to Tasmania.

The session was opened by then Governor Sir Ernest Clark, quote, “at which the remarkable progress of medical science was outlined by the president Dr D H E Lines. These included far-reaching results of diet deficiencies, the use of carbon-dioxide in the treatment of carbon-monoxide poisoning, progress in treatment of leprosy, infantile paralysis, and especially cancer.

The President continued, ‘Medical science unfortunately is seldom given a fair chance of displaying its powers, because, as a rule its assistance is not sought until the condition it is required to combat has assumed alarming proportions ... The present sum of human suffering could be diminished enormously if the public would make proper use of the knowledge already at its disposal.’”⁴

That statement, made nearly 90 years ago, reinforces today’s reality that general practice, remains “the centre of an effective primary health care system.”⁵

At that fourth session in 1934, Governor Sir Ernest and Lady Mary Clark also hosted a Government House garden party for delegates and visitors. It was huge, with more than 1,500 guests and quote, “an unusual atmosphere created by the wearing of academic gowns by the many members of the Medical Congress”.

Fortunately, at this garden party, it not raining. However, the weather was described as oppressively warm, and quote, “the thick haze from the bush fires in the surrounding country districts dulled the rays of the sun to an orange glow, and the sun showed as a bright copper ball through the haze.”⁶

Imagine indulging in “pleasant chat” in that hot academic gown!

May I conclude by warmly again congratulating all the new Fellows in Tasmania here today. I wish each of you the very best in your professional futures. We look forward to congratulating and talking with you during this reception.

Thank you. David ...

[invites Dr Tim Jackson to respond]

⁴ The Mercury, Tuesday 16 January 1934 page 6.

⁵ Dr Tim Jackson op. cit.

⁶ The Mercury op. cit., page 7.