

BARBERSHOP HARMONY AUSTRALIA NATIONAL FESTIVAL 2022
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
FEDERATION BALLROOM, HOTEL GRAND CHANCELLOR, HOBART
THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2022

Good evening and thank you Dan. *[Dan Millgate, MC, introducing HE]*

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 and continued connection to land, sea, and 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 also acknowledge the wonderful organisational work, by so many, to bring this outstanding festival together. You are following the success of your version in Hobart in 2019. May I also draw your attention to the acknowledgements in your Handbook and the many individuals listed there. I am sure you are all well aware of the enthusiastic support provided by our City of Hobart, and by Events Tasmania, a division of our Department of State Growth.

In these challenging times, the sheer positivity and social togetherness of harmony singing groups carry an uplifting message for us all.

Your decision to open up membership to all-comers was and is positive and inclusive.

I am sure you will all enjoy your singing and harmonies here in Hobart. It is interesting to note and many of you are aware that Sverker Johansson, an eminent Swedish linguistics specialist, observed that, “we became singers before we became speakers,” and this “singing phase” could have evolved as much as two million years ago.¹

¹ Johansson, Sverker, *The Dawn of Language: How We Came to Talk*, London, Quercus, 2019, page 281.

The cultural practice of group singing does far predate visual artistic expression – the earliest cave art dating back many thousands of years. Writing was a much later starter at a mere five and a half thousand years ago.

Speaking of things old and not so old, it is wonderful that your festival divides your time between our venerated Theatre Royal, the oldest theatre in Australia, and our In the Hanging Garden, developed by MONA and Riverlee and barely five years old.

I am sure you will find both venues perfect homes for the Festival. But that is not to say this Ballroom isn't about to burst into four-part harmony. Our city will without a doubt thrill and respond to your many quartet and chorus pop-ups.

Congratulations to BHA President Dan Millbank, to your National Council, and to Richard Wadick for your terrific organisational role in this National Festival.

I very much look forward to the medal presentations and to listening to this evening's performers.

In closing, may I officially and wholeheartedly welcome every singer to Hobart. We are very proud to be hosting you all.

Thank you.