IODINE BOOK LAUNCHES
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2022

Thank you, Craig [Farrell, introduced 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 continued connection to land, sea, and waters. I acknowledge the impacts of colonisation upon our First People and commit to a future that listens to and respects Aboriginal stories, culture and history.

May I express my thanks to the President of the Legislative Council for hosting us this morning. I also would like to acknowledge:

- The Honourable Jane Howlett MLC, representing the Premier of Tasmania
- The Honourable Luke Edmunds MLC
- Paul Richards, publisher and co-author of both books, who will be speaking shortly, and his fellow contributors here today:
- Kristen Hynes
- Mu Li
- Judy Seal
- Grant Leeworthy
- Michael Grose
- Monique Reardon
- Edward Butler.
- And Dr Gillian Lewis, and Dr Graeme Riddoch, family of the late Emeritus Professor Ian Lewis.

I was delighted to read in *Seaweed: The Status of Iodine and Climate Change in Tasmania* Paul's dedication to the late Emeritus Professor Ian Lewis, who worked hard to see iodine added to diet in Tasmania. Don and I were fortunate to have known Ian personally and also to have sampled his many Scotch whiskies at dinner with him and his late wife Cynthia. Don had worked with Ian on The Tasmanian Artificial Conception Act.

May I start with the background that has led to us being here today. "The Status of Iodine in Tasmania: a Medical History and Research Symposium", was originally scheduled to take place in April. The symposium was to have included the launch of *Iodophor Tamed Iodine: the Status of Iodine in Tasmania* by Paul Richards and Colleagues.

That book was published in September 2020 in an edition of 150 copies. It was a sequel to *Goitre Monitor: the History of Iodine Deficiency in Tasmania* by John Stewart and Paul Richards, published in 2007.

However, at the outset of the Covid pandemic our island was locked down. Due to continuing concerns about Covid, your planned April 2022 Symposium and the launch of *Iodophor Tamed Iodine* were deferred. It is only recently that large conferences have been revived. Therefore, I am especially delighted to launch the books in person.

Creativity and ideas continued in spite of that Covid-induced deferral. Undeterred, many of the invited Symposium presenters produced essays which became chapters for a new book, *Seaweed: the Status of Iodine and Climate Change in Tasmania*, which has just been published.

The range of specialist areas associated with iodine research in these books is most impressive, including:

- universities' faculties of medicine and health sciences;
- public health;
- oceanography and marine research;
- climate and air pollution;
- nuclear medicine;
- environmental sciences;
- public health nutrition;
- biostatistics;
- fisheries management and research;
- nutrition science;
- endocrinology;
- epidemiology;
- and relevant histories.

What a truly broad range of research specialties!

I would like to note the in-depth contributions of co-authors associated with the Tasmanian Government's Department of Health; the University of Tasmania's IMAS, and Menzies Institute; the Royal Hobart Hospital; and CSIRO.

Iodophor Tamed Iodine: the Status of Iodine in Tasmania has 15 contributing authors. The subsequent, *Seaweed: the Status of Iodine and Climate Change in Tasmania* has 18 contributing authors. Many are contributors to both books. Our Tasmanian-based contributors are joined by academics and researchers from New Zealand, England, Ireland, Japan and mainland Australia. The two publications balance the local and international.

To Paul, many congratulations on this publishing achievement. The outcome of these important books is of significant medical importance.

Congratulations also to all the contributing authors and to your colleagues. The quality of your research is outstanding. However, you must forgive me if I struggle with the wealth of statistics, tables, charts and maps!

I noticed that in *Iodophor* that the chapter entitled "Iodine Status in the United Kingdom", by Sarah Bath and Alex Stewart has no less than eight pages of references of about 120 references in total for the chapter's 22 pages of text!

This is a measure of the scholarship of the contributing authors, their expertise, and their dedication to the topic. As Paul writes: "My colleagues and I have broached [iodine deficiency] and highlighted what concerns there are as we move further into the 21st century and the fight against iodine deficiency not only in Tasmania but worldwide."[1]

Anyone who reads these books will likely agree with Paul that the history of iodine deficiency is a fascinating one.[2]

[1] Richards, Paul, *Iodophor Tamed Iodine: the Status of Iodine in Tasmania*, page xiii.
[2] Richards, Paul, *Seaweed: the Status of Iodine and Climate Change in Tasmania*, page 15.

Our Tasmanian history records a relatively high incidence of thyroid disease due to iodine deficiency in the soil, as a result of leaching by glaciation during the ice age.

I am sure many of us can recall being given goitre tablets at school in the 60s. Then in the late 60s, iodine was added to bread. (page 166 The Status of Iodine). After the introduction of iodine-based iodophors into the dairy industry also in the 1960s and the realisation of a high level of iodine in milk as a result, it was recommended not to continue with the bread program in 1974. In the late 1990s, some research by our Menzies Institute found iodine deficiency was again a problem. After a range of options were considered, it was decided that iodised salt in bread be substituted for salt in 2001 in a voluntary fortification program. (page 172) The mandatory fortification of bread occurred in Australia and New Zealand in 2009. (page 176)

Interestingly, Tasmanian Aborigines suffered no hint of goitre. Paul's research suggests that this is because the traditional Aboriginal diet was rich in iodine, with marine shellfish, mutton bird (albeit seasonally) and, possibly, cooked seaweed.[3]

Seaweed, I have learned, is rich in iodine. The book, *Seaweed* explores "the seaweeds and the species of kelp, the microbiology of iodine production, what influence climate change is having on the iodine cycle and advances in fortification and serendipitous contamination in Tasmania's diet."

I was fascinated to read in Chapter 8 that cited research by Paul has found clear evidence that climate change will increase the accumulation of iodine in seaweeds and kelps, leading to an increase in atmospheric iodine and its disposition on land especially coastal areas.[4] Seaweeds are predicted to thrive in the acidic oceans of the future. So, there is a risk that as the world's climate continues to change, the many people who eat seaweed as a staple part of their diet, or who eat fish and shellfish may consume too much iodine, which can lead to health problems. Paul makes the point that it is essential to understand how the iodine content of seafood, which consume seaweeds, will change under global climate change. (page 134)

[3] *Iodophor*, op. cit., pages 76, 77.
[4] Seaweed at page 133

So, Paul's reference at the start of both books to Hippocrates writings, namely, "the understanding of the environment as a factor which affects human beings and is also of significance to the incidence of disease..." is apposite.

These books are more than timely and urgent reminders about the health of people as well as our planet.

I am very pleased now to declare both these books launched. May I again congratulate all involved in their research writing, editing and production. They are important additions to local and global publishing. Thank you.