

24th INTERNATIONAL SEAWEED SYMPOSIUM
RECEPTION REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2023

Good evening. I hope you have all had a productive and hard-working first full day of your Symposium. I shall be brief in my remarks so that you can enjoy socialising and networking.

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 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 say a little bit about this Government House. The architectural style is Victorian Gothic and the building was completed in 1858. There had been previous designs and initial construction attempts on this site – in the late 1820s and again in the early 1840s. It is very likely that this design was a clever modification of those two attempts.

There are seventy rooms on three floors, with a very large roof space. All are in excellent condition, as are our gardens, which follow their original early Victorian style of formal inner terraces and less formal outer fields.

Government House is not here because of the impressive view, or its visual prominence as a part of Tasmania's government system. It is here because much of this promontory sits on a deep sandstone bed. A pre-existing quarry which is on your left as you came in, had high-quality sandstone, which was used to construct this building. That quarry was beautifully landscaped in the mid-1870s into a large ornamental pond. Please have a look at it on your right as you leave.

In the early decades, the Government House Estate reached down to the western bank of the river. There are accounts of earlier Governors and their families travelling by water to and from the Governor's private jetty, which also had a large bathing

pavilion. Later, the riverside railway line and road were built, effectively cutting off access to the river.

Below us at the large basement level, is a commercial-standard Kitchen, and many staff offices. Previously, most of these offices were staff living quarters. This was a time when Government House was almost entirely self-sufficient, employing many people to cultivate crops, milk cows, look after the pigs and so on. There was, in fact, a period in the second half of the nineteenth century when Governors raised livestock and entered them in agricultural show competitions.

Today, our only livestock are chickens. We are all very fond of them and their eggs, but we never consume the birds. We have a substantial Kitchen Garden – as a vegetable production site, it dates to the 1820s – and much of what you'll eat this evening is from that garden. This evening's canapes prepared by the Government House Kitchen team include an agar dish jelly, seaweed and rice noodles, and seaweed sushi.

We also have a flourishing vineyard. For those enjoying the wines, they are Government House Tasmania riesling and cabernet merlot. All the flowers inside are from our cutting garden.

May I conclude with a tragic but truly remarkable story. In January 1975, the Tasman Bridge, which is near here, was cleaved in half by a tanker, with loss of life. One result of that was that a small ferry company began to build boats to compensate for the loss of the bridge.

Today, that company, Incat, makes some of the world's largest, fastest, quietest commercial catamarans. They are in service in many countries around the world, they are environmentally friendly, and their enthusiastic eighty-year-old founder and owner Bob Clifford said recently that he can't slow down: "I've got more work ahead of me in the next few years than I had in the last 50," he said.¹

On that note, thank you again for inviting me to open your 24th International Seaweed Symposium today. I again wish you every success in your discussions.

Please do enjoy the reception.

¹ *Mercury*, Saturday 4 February 2023 page 7.