

**2023 ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING OF THE
AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF LEGAL MEDICINE
ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOTEL GRAND CHANCELLOR, SATURDAY 25 MARCH 2023**

Good morning everyone and thank you for inviting me to open your Annual Scientific Meeting for 2023.

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 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.

I am pleased to recognise that this is the first time that your annual meeting has been held in association with the American College of Legal Medicine. I warmly welcome all members of both Colleges, who are attending in person or who are attending virtually.

And may I acknowledge the President of the Australasian College of Legal Medicine, Dr Adam Griffin, and the President of the American College of Legal Medicine, Dr Eli Avila.

I am delighted to open this annual meeting, particularly as this is the first time that your meeting has been held in Hobart, Tasmania. I congratulate your organising committee both on your choice of venue and on your perseverance to finally bring the meeting to fruition here, after a rescheduling in 2020, due to the Covid pandemic.

I may be a little biased, but I believe that Tasmania is a wonderful location for your meeting. I shall give you a brief sketch about our island. Around half of our state is set aside for national parks and reserves.¹ Our population density is

¹ <https://parks.tas.gov.au/about-us/managing-our-parks-and-reserves/reserve-listing> accessed 22 Mar 23

low, with about 550, 000 people living in an area the size of Ireland, that has a population of around 5 million. We are renowned for our clean air, high quality produce, the accessibility of walks and large areas of World Heritage listed wilderness.

Our island story is complex and ancient. It has 40,000 years of continuous Aboriginal heritage and culture. The Aboriginal population diminished over a period of 30 years during a period of conflicts, especially during the Black War in the 1820s to 30s. The spread of infectious diseases also had fatal consequences. Today, we have around 30,000 people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander living in Tasmania.²

Our island is the last remnant of the ancient continent of Gondwanaland, with a legacy of complex geology. We have our planet's largest exposure of dolerite, a stunning example being the Organ Pipes rocks on the face of our kunanyi/MountWellington.

We have eleven major lakes and about 3000 smaller ones, many of which are in our central highlands and are called tarns.

Tasmania has long been recognised as the principal gateway to Antarctica. The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic and Marine Living Resources Secretariat is headquartered here.

After your meeting, I hope that you have time to visit some of our natural and historical attractions.

According to your website³, the term Legal Medicine represents four broad areas of Civil Legal Medicine, Criminal or Forensic Legal Medicine, Medical Ethics, and medical practice areas affected by statute law.

Your conference theme "Law and Regulation of Healthcare" enables discussions about these four areas.

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/census-population-and-housing-counts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release>

accessed 19 February 2023.

³ <https://legalmedicine.com.au/about-us/> accessed 15 Mar 23

I particularly note that one of your papers covers the regulation of vaccines during the pandemic response. Our general medical practitioners all had to become the specialist generalist with the pandemic, required to know about the Covid vaccines, their strengths and limitations, as well as their regulation and availability⁴. We also discovered the reintroduction of old-fashioned public health responses during the Covid crisis with social distancing and the wearing of masks.

Other papers cover topics from the opioid crisis to forensics and to the impact of new legislation on healthcare providers. You also have a focus on trauma and its management in relation to mental health, individual practitioners and in the wider workplace.

May I also note Walter Sofronoff's paper regarding the Commission of Inquiry into Forensic DNA testing in Queensland. I understand that this has been a topic of considerable public interest not only in Queensland but throughout Australia.

As a community we place an enormous trust in our health care providers. Years of evidence have shown that trust is not misplaced. However, the complexity of diagnostic and treatment options have grown exponentially in recent years. This has been matched with the growth of regulation alongside the increased levels of training, clinical supervision, accreditation and ongoing audits. Your College fulfills a significant role in studying and assessing the significant relationship between regulation and health care, and equally importantly the appropriate level of regulation.

Kapur et al, in their paper⁵, considered this when they compared Medicine to Aviation as two highly regulated industries and considered the role of regulation in the respective safety cultures of both professions. They concluded that the relative safety, despite significant inherent risks, is enhanced by the level of regulation imposed. Your College's work in considering regulation in healthcare

⁴ Reeve J et al Dismantling Lord Moran's ladder: the primary care expert generalist Br J Gen Pract. 2013 Jan; 63(606): 34–35. doi: 10.3399/bjgp13X660823

⁵ Kapur N, Parand A, Soukup T, Reader T, Sevdalis N. Aviation and healthcare: a comparative review with implications for patient safety. JRSM Open. 2015 Dec 2;7(1):2054270415616548. doi: 10.1177/2054270415616548. PMID: 26770817; PMCID: PMC4710114.

is unquestionably very important. As a former lawyer and judge, I am very aware of the difficult balance that must be struck between individual freedom and community restriction in healthcare. That balance was tested during the extended Covid pandemic responses and subsequent individual restrictions.

I wish you all the best in your deliberations as you attempt to address these important issues.

It is now my great pleasure to declare the 2023 Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australasian College of Legal Medicine officially open.

Thank you.