

**THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
SOUTHERN TASMANIAN BRANCH – COMMONWEALTH DAY 2023
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 14 MARCH 2023**

[VICE-REGAL SALUTE]

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to this reception to mark Commonwealth Day 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 connection to land, sea and waters. I acknowledge the impacts of colonisation upon our First People and commit to a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

May I acknowledge among us:

- Kristie Johnston MP, Independent Member for Clark
- Barry Smith, President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Southern Tasmania
- Frank McGregor, Honorary UK Consul in Tasmania
- Stephen Jones, Chairman of the Royal Over-Seas League Tasmania
- Denise Rossiter, President of the Welsh Society Southern Tasmania
- Margaret Duggan, President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Northern Tasmania
- Daniel Chan, President of the Chinese Community Association of Tasmania
- and the marvellous Pipers of The Derwent Scottish Pipe Band who played for us.

Each year on Commonwealth Day, a Commonwealth Day service is held at Westminster Abbey, and the Monarch attends as the Head of the

Commonwealth. Yesterday, King Charles delivered his inaugural Message from the Great Pulpit.

It is a tradition that the Governor reads out the Monarch's Commonwealth Day Message at this annual reception.

His Majesty said:

“Commonwealth Day was an occasion of particular pride for my beloved Mother, The late Queen – a treasured opportunity to celebrate our Commonwealth family, to whose service she dedicated her long and remarkable life.

“In succeeding Her Majesty as Head of the Commonwealth, I draw great strength from her example, together with all that I have learnt from the extraordinary people I have met, throughout the Commonwealth, over so many years.

“The Commonwealth has been a constant in my own life, and yet its diversity continues to amaze and inspire me. Its near-boundless potential as a force for good in the world demands our highest ambition; its sheer scale challenges us to unite and be bold.

“This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Charter of the Commonwealth, which gives expression to our defining values – peace and justice; tolerance, respect and solidarity; care for our environment, and for the most vulnerable among us.

“These are not simply ideals. In each lies an imperative to act, and to make a practical difference in the lives of the 2.6 billion people who call the Commonwealth home.

“Whether on climate change and biodiversity loss, youth opportunity and education, global health, or economic co-operation, the Commonwealth can play an indispensable role in the most pressing issues of our time. Ours is an association not just of shared values, but of common purpose and joint action.

“In this we are blessed with the ingenuity and imagination of a third of the world’s population, including one and a half billion people under the age of thirty. Our shared humanity contains such precious diversity of thought, culture, tradition and experience. By listening to each other, we will find so many of the solutions that we seek.

“This extraordinary potential, which we hold in common, is more than equal to the challenges we face. It offers us unparalleled strength not merely to face the future, but to build it. Here, the Commonwealth has an incredible opportunity, and responsibility, to create a genuinely durable future – one that offers the kind of prosperity that is in harmony with Nature and that will also secure our unique and only planet for generations to come.

“The myriad connections between our nations have sustained and enriched us for more than seven decades. Our commitment to peace, progress and opportunity will sustain us for many more.

“Let ours be a Commonwealth that not only stands together, but strives together, in restless and practical pursuit of the global common good.”

King Charles’s historic words were for all of the 56 member countries of the Commonwealth. That is a vast audience. Here, in Tasmania, we wish His Majesty King Charles the Third a long and happy reign.

I shall conclude by noting that the Commonwealth Day theme for 2023 is “Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future”. Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Right Honourable Patricia Scotland explains it this way, and I quote:

“This theme signifies the active commitment of member states to collaborate on climate action, support the development of free and democratic societies, and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of all Commonwealth citizens. And during this Commonwealth Year of Youth, it

focuses our efforts on building a better future for the 1.5 billion Commonwealth citizens under the age of thirty.”¹

‘Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future’ is a most important focus, in an unpredictable world. I encourage us all to do what we can to promote this theme.

Thank you.

¹ <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-day-2023-theme-announced-forging-sustainable-and-peaceful-common>, accessed 12 March 2023.