

**ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF  
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS (RANZCO), TASMANIAN BRANCH  
ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING 2023**

**REMARKS BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

**DRAWING ROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 16 JUNE 2023**

Good evening. I am delighted to warmly welcome you to this reception for delegates attending the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists.

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.

Our records show that we have been hosting a reception for RANZCO for meetings since at least 2013, a long association which I am very pleased to continue. Your work for our Australian and New Zealand communities is significant and can have an enormous impact on people's lives.

The theme of your meeting of cataract and refractive is very topical. According to your meeting website, "with so much changing in the cataract and refractive landscape, we want to make this meeting fun and interesting, with a goal to enlighten on some of the more modern techniques, equipment, and IOL (intra-ocular lens) technology".

Research tells us that more than 800,000 Australians are living with vision loss. For many, this is avoidable and due to conditions, such as cataract, can effectively be treated by relatively routine surgery. As well as the obvious loss to the individual, the economic loss to the nation of vision impairment is in the tens of millions of dollars annually.

From the first true cataract operation in 1747 by French surgeon Jacques Daviel with approximately a 50% success rate, you use techniques that are successful

in up to 95% of cases. Research has been instrumental in achieving that dramatic increase, and research is at the heart of your meeting.

I note you have a full day of sessions tomorrow starting at 7.30 am. You have fifteen different presenters, with topics as diverse as managing astigmatism to the history of cataract surgery and with updates on the Rural Enhanced Training Network and on Cataract Surgery Simulator Training.

I hope that during and after your meeting, you may have some time to look around our city and perhaps participate in some of the Dark Mofo events. After the conference, you may have some time to enjoy our State. To give you a brief sketch, Tasmania is the world's 26th largest island, around the size of Sri Lanka. Where Sri Lanka has a population of 22 million, we have about 570,000.

Our island story is complex and ancient, with 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, and due to the spread of infectious diseases. Today, we have around 30,000 people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander living in Tasmania.<sup>1</sup>

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/Mount Wellington.

Today, about 45% of our total Tasmanian land area is protected within National Parks, reserves and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The latter covers almost 20 percent of the island and includes many Aboriginal sites.<sup>2</sup>

We have eleven major lakes and about 3000 smaller ones, which are called tarns.

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<sup>1</sup> <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.

<sup>2</sup> [The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Areas | Discover Tasmania](#), accessed 19 May 2022.

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.

In conclusion, I wish you all the very best in your deliberations tomorrow. May I thank you for your work to provide a better future for our community by minimising the loss of vision suffered by so many.

Thank you.