

**TASMANIA UNIVERSITY RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL CLUB  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 7 JULY 2023**

**[Vice-Regal Salute is played]**

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to this reception to mark the significant 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tasmania University Rugby Union Football Club

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.

May I acknowledge:

- Jordan Ryan –Club President
- Georgia Stewart – Vice President
- Matt Jensen – Patron
- And all the Committee Members and the Organising Committee.

Any 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an occasion worth celebrating. In the context of a sporting team, a 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary is particularly significant because it is a historic celebration of players past and present, young and not so young. All come together to share this significant experience.

When Bede Donnelly [Treasurer, attending] first requested this reception in January, he mentioned that your Club had been a foundation member of the establishment of rugby in Tasmania. That fact sent us to the archives and we uncovered some interesting results about rugby in Tasmania and this Vice-Regal office.

At a meeting in the Hobart Town Hall in August 1933 a decision was made to establish the Southern Tasmanian Rugby Union. As we know, at that stage the

University club already existed. One early problem was encountered. That was the lack of grounds to play on — in fact, amusingly, the first ever game of Rugby Union had to be played on the Moonah Speedway!<sup>1</sup>

Vice-Regal association with Rugby Union followed soon after. In June 1934, less than a year after your new Union was formed, a game described as being “of a standard previously unequalled in this State”<sup>2</sup> was played. The game was between Southern Tasmania and a visiting Melbourne University team. Tasmanian Governor Sir Ernest Clark attended and was introduced to each player before the game. He then watched in the Wentworth Street pavilion – which presumably is the site of today’s home ground of the South Hobart Football Club.

Sir Ernest Clark subsequently accepted Patronage of the Southern Tasmanian Rugby Union. He went on to become our longest serving Governor, from 1933 to 1945, largely because of his service throughout the Second World War. His successor Sir Hugh Binney took up office in December 1945, and just over three months later had agreed to become Patron of the Southern Tasmanian Rugby Union.

Your name change to the Tasmanian Rugby Union occurred in the late 1940s. The next Governor after Binney, Sir Ronald Cross, became Patron of the Tasmanian Rugby Union in 1953.

Our Government House records are unclear about Vice-Regal patronage through the next few decades. However, Governor Sir Phillip Bennett, 1987 to 1995, was Patron-in-Chief. Most recently, Governor William Cox was your Patron between 2004 and 2008.

I confess to being a sports tragic myself. Some of you may know that I represented Tasmania in hockey and tennis, and I played a lot of Real Tennis. So, in my community engagements with young people, I like to encourage them not only in their academic and creative work, but to play sport. Physical and mental health and sport go hand in hand.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Mercury*, Thursday 31 August 1933, page 10.

<sup>2</sup> *The Mercury*, Saturday 2 June 1934, page 5.

This is one reason why I happily accepted the invitation to become the inaugural Patron of the Tasmania JackJumpers basketball team. There is no doubt that the team's impact on the court has made a significant impact on young people, encouraging them to participate in sport.

I am Patron of other sporting entities including Athletics Tasmania; Riding for the Disabled Association of Tasmania; the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania; Veterans Cricket Tasmania; and Cricket Tasmania.

In fact, just last Monday, Don and I hosted a reception on behalf of Cricket Tasmania for our successful Women's National Cricket League Champions, the Tasmanian Tigers.

May I conclude with the famous saying, that in rugby there are piano players – the swift elusive backs – and piano shifters – the forwards with plenty of grunt.

Congratulations again on your 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. And I understand that on Saturday you play against Harlequins in a re-match of the first ever game of rugby played in Tasmania between two distinct clubs 90 years ago. All my best wishes, and now please enjoy your celebratory reception.

Thank you.