

**THE TASMANIAN SOCIETY OF JUSTICES OF THE PEACE INC  
2023 ANNUAL DINNER  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
MOTOR YACHT CLUB OF TASMANIA, LINDISFARNE  
SATURDAY 15 JULY 2023**

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for your invitation to join you for your annual dinner of your Tasmanian Society of Justices of the Peace.

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.

Before I was commissioned as Tasmania's 29<sup>th</sup> Governor in June 2021, I was a Judge of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia, and before that I was a lawyer for many years. During this time, I was well aware of the important work done by Justices of the Peace in supporting our justice system.

Our Society of Justices of the Peace dates to 1922. In October last year at Government House, we hosted a reception to commemorate your Centenary. It was wonderful that we combined your Centenary celebration with a reception for delegates attending the Australasian Council of Justices' Associations held in Hobart.

We know that the record of Justices of the Peace dates to well before your 1922 Centenary, in fact— more than 800 years before!

In 1195, Richard I commissioned some knights to preserve the peace in unruly areas.

They were directly responsible to the King for ensuring the law was upheld; they preserved the 'King's Peace' and were known as the 'Keepers of the Peace'.

These Keepers of the Peace disappeared in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The Office of Justice of the Peace was officially established in England in 1327 and has a long and honourable history. We acknowledge together that history at this, your annual dinner.

However, that is not to say that your history as Justices of the Peace has always been complimented and appreciated.

An article in the *Devon Herald Latrobe* newspaper reported in 1886 as follows:

“There seems to be a decidedly low standard in this State for appointment of justices of the peace. Extraordinary precautions have now been taken to ensure that this honourable dignity shall not be bestowed on criminals, for authority in a hesitating way has concluded, it must draw the line somewhere...many of them dearly like to add the initials “JP” to their names as a kind of badge of standing. Consequently, the appointment is sought rather than conferred, and until recently it was left almost entirely to members of Parliament to determine who should be appointed. J.P.-ship became a kind of reward for services rendered, and as there have been members of Parliament of dubious honesty, it is easy to understand how it happened that in the past there have been justices with prior convictions for criminal offences. One, in fact, is reported to have been a lifer. The Law Department now goes to the other extreme and requires any candidate...to submit to police investigation, give proof of character, and even have fingerprints taken. Naturally there is not now so much rush for appointment, which is not a bad thing!”<sup>1</sup> End of quote. May I also add that the *Devon Herald Latrobe* stopped publishing in 1889.

Of course, that history has changed significantly since that accusatory report some 137 years ago.

Now, we have around 900 JPs in Tasmania, whose appointments, powers and functions are currently regulated by our Tasmanian *Justices of the Peace Act 2018*. JPs must undertake and complete any training or professional development prescribed. The Department of Justice administers and processes applications for appointment. As Governor, I make appointments on the recommendation of the Attorney-General.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/24888375?searchTerm=Justices of the Peace-Trove](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/24888375?searchTerm=Justices%20of%20the%20Peace-Trove)

May I conclude by sharing some brief comments on my recent trip to London. In my role as Governor, I represented our State at the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. I also attended other functions including two receptions with representatives of the Realms and other dignitaries, a lunch with the Minister of State Indo-Pacific at the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle.

The Coronation has a long tradition, dating back well before Richard I to William the Conqueror in 1066. The Coronation was conducted by the Church of England, but the service was altered from past Coronations in that it was represented by multiple faiths, cultures and communities across the UK. It was a very inclusive service.

Before returning home, I also had an audience with His Majesty at which Don also attended.

May I take the opportunity to thank all our Justices of the Peace for your service to our communities. May I also wish you all well as you continue on in your second century in the application of the rule of Law in our State.

Thank you.