

PACIFICA CONGRESS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOTEL GRAND CHANCELLOR, FRIDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2023

Good morning and a very warm welcome to all delegates to this Pacifica Congress Conference for 2023.

May I extend a special Tasmanian welcome to the international speakers and delegates from South Africa, New Zealand, the USA and the UK.

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.

It gives me great pleasure to have been asked to open your Conference. May I congratulate your organising committee on their inspired choice of venue. Of course, I am somewhat biased, but I think that our island State is particularly beautiful at this time of year.

I note that many of your workshops focus on psychological issues involved in family conflict and breakdown. Having studied psychology and as a former judge of the Federal Circuit Court, as it then was, I have some knowledge of the impact of conflict and family breakdown on all parties, especially children.

May I commend the organisers for your comprehensive program of twelve workshops and four plenary sessions over two days, as well as your pre-conference workshops yesterday, on topics that are fully aligned with your mission “to assist children and their families to overcome the harm that conflict causes by means of research, education, innovation and training.”¹

I hope that after the conference you will have time to see some of our beautiful State. May I make a few remarks particularly for our international and national delegates to give you a snapshot of our island State.²

¹ <https://pacificacongress.org/mission-statement/>

² These facts about Tasmania are also referred to in previous speeches to the International Seaweed Symposium 20/2/2022 and to the National Bishops of Anglican Church of Australia reception 17/3/2023.

Tasmania is the world's 26th largest island, around the size of Sri Lanka. Where Sri Lanka has a population of 22 million, Tasmania has about 570,000.

Our island story is complex, and of course ancient. It has 40,000 years of continuous Aboriginal heritage and culture. The Aboriginal people of lutruwita are the traditional owners and custodians of the land. Colonisation of the island started when it was permanently settled by the British in 1803 as a penal settlement.

The Aboriginal population diminished over a period of 30 years during a period of conflicts, especially during the Black War in the 1820s to early 30s and the spread of infectious diseases. Today, we have around 30,000 people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander living in Tasmania.³

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, of which a beautiful example is the officially named Organ Pipes 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 significant Aboriginal heritage and cultural sites.⁴

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. We have the Australian Antarctic Division in Hobart and the Australian icebreaker *Nuyina* is based here. Also, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic and Marine Living Resources Secretariat is headquartered here.

Tasmania's cultural and intellectual heritage is rich. May I give you three brief examples.

³ <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 30 August 2023

⁴ <https://www.discovertasmania.com.au/experiences/stories/world-heritage-wilderness/>

Accessed 30 August 2023

Australia's first novel was written by a Van Diemen's Land convict, Henry Savery, in 1830 and printed in Hobart.⁵ He began writing the novel in his prison cell in Hobart, where he was doing time for forgery. The book, titled *Quintus Servinton*, was largely autobiographical, about what happens to a well-educated man from a well-to-do family who makes poor choices, passing forged cheques while in business.

Second, the movement for our Australian Federation was started in Tasmania in the 1850s. Sir William Deane has fairly dubbed Tasmanian lawyer and politician Andrew Inglis Clark as 'the primary architect of our constitution'.⁶ Clark was a mechanical engineer who turned to the law at the age of 24. He became a liberal reformer and introduced into Parliament 228 bills on a range of subjects. Significantly, Clark modified Hare's electoral system to achieve our Hare-Clark system of voting, still used today. Clark's contributions to Tasmania have been recognised by a Hobart electorate having been renamed to Clark in 2019.

Third, Tasmanians have a long list of inventions including the portable sheeppark and handler; a forestry logging grab vehicle; an automatic potato digger; the fibreglass Igloo Satellite Cabin for Antarctic Living; the world's first composite beam strengthener for bridges and houses; the world's first laminated tennis racket; the wave-piercing catamaran and the Dynasphere lightning protection.⁷

And I note that Tasmania claims more heritage-listed stone buildings than the rest of Australia, together.

In conclusion, may I congratulate you all on our common goal and commitment to improving family law practice and to protecting children from harm and from the impacts of their involvement with conflict and family breakdown.

Enjoy your stay and I wish you all well in your deliberations and discussions.

Thank you.

⁵ <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/quintus-servinton#:~:text=Quintus%20Servinton%3A%20A>, accessed 19 May 2022.

⁶ <https://www.utas.edu.au/library/exhibitions/clark/work.html>

⁷ *Tasmanian Inventions & Innovations*, Launceston, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 1987, various pagings.