

**RECEPTION TO MARK THE FOREST ECONOMICS CONGRESS  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2023**

Good evening, everyone, and a very warm welcome to Government House for this reception. Together, we shall also join later in a tree planting to mark this Forest Economics Congress.

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather this evening, who flourished on Country as part of the South East Nation of Aboriginal people. We honour them, and today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of Country.

May I acknowledge Aboriginal people, and First Nations people from elsewhere, who are present this evening. I acknowledge your Elders and knowledge holders, both past and present, and the role they play in the continuation of cultural practice.

We appreciate the deep connections Aboriginal and First Nations people have with Country and with their stories that continue to be celebrated in cultural practices and family gatherings.

Reading cultural landscapes allows us to hear a story of Country that goes back to the beginning of time and provides wisdom and knowledge, to inform how we best care for and manage Country into the future. May we all listen to these stories, and the voices of First Nations people. We thank you for your continued custodianship of Country through cultural practices and advocacy for truth-telling and healing Country.

May I now thank Kirsha Kaechele, AJ King and the Congress Team for arranging this gathering to discuss challenging questions and to encourage looking forward to a common and shared imagined future.

You have attracted 120 delegates to attend this Congress. I was impressed to read about their breadth of experience and expertise. You have representatives from an

array of industry and community. It is gratifying for our Tasmanian community that there is so much interest in the future of our Tasmanian forests.

As we all know, Tasmania has a long history of division in respect of the use of our forests. This Congress gives leaders and experts from government and across industry and community and from around the world, the valuable opportunity to come together and to discuss various ideas of how we may all connect with, use, and appreciate our trees and forests. Your delegates across the forestry debate are encouraged to look forward, and to identify and articulate common interests and ideas, to a shared imagined future.

As Governor, I am personally grateful that you have all come to this Congress for these critical discussions about the value and future of our forests, in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill. I am delighted that Government House can recognise the importance of this Congress to our State and extend some hospitality to you all.

In my welcome I mentioned a tree planting. Government House has a tradition of tree planting for significant occasions. At the end of the reception, we shall all move outside for a ceremonial planting of three trees that will be part of a grove and a symbol of the work of this Congress.

We thank the Congress' First Nations Team for working with us in respect of the tree selection and for their ongoing conversations with Government House.

The trees chosen are *Eucalyptus Morisbyi* which were once prolific along the banks of our Derwent River but are now rare. In time, the grove will be landscaped with native grasses and other endemic trees and understory vegetation, an example of which you can see here on the stage.

The tree plantings are part of our plan for sustainability in these grounds, with the planting of species and varieties that are likely to cope with climate change and be viable green spaces into the future.

In conclusion, I thank you again for attending this Congress and this reception. I wish you all well in your discussions. I look forward to hearing about commitments to pathways forward reached during the Congress.