

ROLEX SYDNEY TO HOBART YACHT RACE 2023
SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE ALAN BLOW AO
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOTEL GRAND CHANCELLOR, HOBART
SUNDAY 31 DECEMBER 2023

Thank you, Gordon. [*Bray, MC introduced HE*]

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

It's a pleasure and privilege for me, as Lieutenant-Governor, to be part of this presentation for the 78th Sydney to Hobart, organised by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia with the cooperation of the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania.¹

Each year this great race is a testament to individual skill, determination and bravery. But above all, it is the spirit of camaraderie that rides with you and makes this such an unforgettable event at the end of the year. The huge Sydney send-off and the equally huge crowds here to greet you are ample proof of that. So, well done to all competitors, and I believe that's over 1000 sailors.

Inasmuch as this is a world-famous sporting event, it is always worth us remembering that there is more to this event than mere competition. The Cruising Yacht Club of Australia has influenced the world in race communications and sea safety, maintaining the highest standards for race entry.²

And on behalf of the Tasmanian community, and particularly all participants and spectators, I heartily thank the individual organisers, volunteers and staff who have once again put in a great effort this year.

I mentioned this being the 78th running of the Sydney to Hobart, since the inaugural event in 1945 that was arranged almost by chance among a small group of friends.

Another number that I think we can all appreciate today is the number fifty. Competitor Lindsay May, navigator aboard *Antipodes*, has this year become the first sailor in the race's history to complete 50 consecutive races, his first being

¹ [Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race 2023](#), accessed 21 December 2023.

² [Rolex Sydney Hobart Yacht Race 2023](#), accessed 21 December 2023.

in 1973. *Antipodes* was 13th across the line, arriving on Saturday evening. Congratulations Lindsay. [HE leads brief applause]

At the 1973 presentation ceremony, the then Governor, Sir Stanley Burbury, said this:

“It is a very happy coincidence for me that within a month of becoming Governor of this State I find myself officially associated with this great Ocean Yacht Race.”
End of quote.

So that particular race was a first for both Lindsay and Sir Stanley – who, incidentally, went on to say in his 1973 Governor’s speech that royal patronage of yachting events was in accordance with a long tradition. By that he did not mean dating back to 1945. He was referring instead to the first race in British waters, between King Charles the Second’s boat *Katherine* and the Duke of York’s boat *Anne* – that was in the year 1661!

But now, in 2023, we have witnessed one of the most intense and agonising duels for line honours in the 78-year history of the Sydney-to-Hobart, *LawConnect* beating *Andoo Comanche* by just 51 seconds, a drifting boat length, after the lead changed seven or eight times between Long Beach and the finish line. And that after more than 600 nautical miles of unpredictable open ocean weather, including wild thunderstorms as they raced and duelled down the east coast.

In 1982 *Condor* beat *Apollo* by seven seconds – half a boat length – and that remains the closest finish. The sailing time then was three days and one hour, as opposed to *LawConnect* and *Comanche* cutting that almost in half to one day and nineteen hours.

Many congratulations to *LawConnect* skipper Christian Beck for achieving your inaugural line honours win and with it the John H Illingworth Challenge Cup. As the waterside live commentator Peter Shipway said of Christian and his crew: “They are drinking champagne now after three years of flat beer!”

And commiserations but well done to multiple line honours winner *Comanche*, skippered this year by John Winning Junior. Congratulations to the crew members of both boats.

And I extend that to every competitor in the 2023 Rolex Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

Finally, I offer many congratulations to the skipper and crew of Tasmanian yacht *Alive*, being awarded the Tattersall Cup as overall winner on IRC racing corrected time. Tasmanian boats seldom achieve the main prize; that *Alive* has done it twice now, the first being in 2018, is a great credit to the boat and crews.

Brilliant work, skipper Duncan Hine and crew, coming in as the fourth boat and taking out the top award for 2023. And as a footnote of real interest, *Alive* is the second Tasmanian boat to win the Tattersall Cup twice – *Westward* having won in 1947 and 1948.

Thank you Rolex, sponsor of the race since 2002. We salute you for maintaining this blue water classic as one of the world's most challenging and finest ocean races.

And I look forward to presenting trophies.

Thank you.