

**INTERNATIONAL WALL OF FRIENDSHIP
BANGLADESH COMMEMORATIVE STONE UNVEILING
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BELLALA BUILDING, HOBART, SATURDAY 16 DECEMBER 2023**

Thank you, Imadul [*MC introduced HE*].

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather, 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. I recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

We are very pleased to be here with you today to be part of this important International Wall of Friendship ceremony, with the unveiling of the Bangladesh community Commemorative Stone.

May I say that it is an honour to be officiating with Abu Chowdhury, President of the Hobart Bangladesh Community Association.

This is my first occasion as your IWF Patron to be involved in an unveiling ceremony. I am pleased to know that a number of my predecessors, as Patrons, have unveiled national commemorative stones over the years. In fact, they unveiled sixteens stones, dating back to the 1990s, representing communities of Albania, Bosnia, Burma, Ethiopia, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Macedonia, Malaysia, Nepal, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan, Timor Leste, and Zimbabwe.

These plaques around us are beautifully designed, coloured and varied and share a unity, here in the Sunken Garden.

It has been suggested that this may be the only Wall of its kind in Australia and possibly the world. The Wall is an ongoing tribute to our island's many migrants. This Wall is an expression of harmony and is a timely link with International Migrants Day, which falls in two days on Monday.

This International Wall of Friendship is also a reminder of the duration of Tasmania's multicultural social fabric.

The official opening of The Wall of Friendship took place in 1992. But the idea dates back to 1966 – nearly sixty years ago – when the then Minister for Tourism suggested that a migrant memorial monument be built in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. This was to recognise the contribution of migrants to the development of Tasmania.¹

With the establishment in Tasmania in 1981 of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the idea for a monument developed further. Locations were suggested in the Elizabeth Street Mall, Franklin Square, or on the lawn between Parliament House and Salamanca Place. An overarching Aboriginal contribution was also suggested. The concept idea of using a wall emerged.²

After many delays, this site was chosen. May I quote from an official source summarising the project, once it was erected here. I quote:

“The Wall stood as a fine example of cooperation between the people of Tasmania and their elected governments. The ethnic communities had donated the feature blocks; the State Government had provided essential Ministerial and administrative support; and the Australian Government had supplied the site and building funds.”³ End of quote.

I mentioned the Aboriginal contribution. As we see, and can read from the inscription, Alan Mansell's mural [*the ceiling and around a pole in the centre of the arena*] “Reaching Out” is a greeting from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, a ceiling mural creating a “welcome sky” for the Wall, with its central pillar linking the elements of nature from earth to sky.

So now, on this 16th December 2023, we welcome the unveiling of the Bangladesh community Commemorative Stone. It is the 63rd to be placed and

¹ “A history of Tasmania's International Wall of Friendship”, written and produced by Karle Underwood for the International Wall of Friendship Development Committee, February 1988, page 9 paragraphs 1 and 2. [Unpublished document.]

² Op. cit, page 11 paragraph 2.

³ Op. cit., page 17 and 18, last and first paragraph.

unveiled. Our Bangladesh community in Tasmania of some 2000 people is thriving, working across many sectors around our State.

May I conclude by congratulating everyone involved with this International Wall of Friendship. It is a fine Tasmanian story and one of which to be proud. It is a permanent record of our multicultural identity.

May I also wish you all the best for your celebration of International Migrants Day on Monday.

I now look forward to the unveiling ceremony.

Thank you.