

**VARIETY AUSTRALIA, THE CHILDREN'S CHARITY
RECEPTION FOR NATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS
AND EXECUTIVE OFFICERS
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DRAWING ROOM, TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2024**

Good evening and welcome to Government House to this reception for Variety Australia Board Members and Executive Officers.

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.

I understand from Mohammad Aldergham that you were last here in Tasmania in 2018. May I add a special welcome back for your Executive Officers Group meeting and your National Forum. As Governor, I place much emphasis on the importance of my community role. As such, I am a staunch supporter and admirer of the significant community work done by Variety Tasmania. Your work includes the famous annual TasBash motoring event, multiple events at our Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens next door, and your popular Variety of Gins fundraiser to be held next Friday week.

Mention of our Royal Gardens next door prompts me to tell you a little about our Government House and grounds, given that we have been good neighbours with them, for well over 200 years. The Royal Gardens date their origin back to 1818. It was then that vegetables and fruit began to be cultivated for the early Lieutenant-Governors of the young colony of Van Diemen's Land. The Government House residence was down in the town. There is an image of it *[HE gestures Haughton Forrest painting on south wall]*. Also, you can also see it in this painting on my left *[HE gestures the Knud Bull painting]* to give you context of its placement on the waterfront.

As to the origins of this Government House building, it has a fascinating story. In 1805, a young convict stonemason, John Hangan, was permitted to open a sandstone quarry on this site. His wife, Jane, grew vegetables across a large area around here and the annual records of return indicate good crops for most years.

John Hangan's quarry had sandstone of such good quality that a decision was made to build a new Government House here on this site, rather than elsewhere in the town.

Two early efforts to build the new Government House failed. First, an 1827 design began to be constructed but was halted for lack of money. A second attempt in 1841 had a modified design. It also failed. Then, between 1853 and 1858, this present building – a third modification of the modified second design! – was finally constructed. It is a very fine example of neo-Gothic, or Early Victorian architecture. It includes architectural features such as allowing natural light down from internal roof skylights. You may notice these if you look up in the Main Hallway.

The House is complemented with 37-acres of grounds. These were laid out in classical fashion, with neat formal terraces giving way to fields and stands of trees.

Many of you will know that heritage protocols prevent additions and significant modifications to this and other listed buildings and their grounds. There is nevertheless a long list of what we may call Governors' additions: most of them are to the grounds and benefit this place. Some examples are the 1889 grass tennis courts, which are just about the only grass courts still in existence in Tasmania; a 1965 bowling green and croquet lawn; a 1988 Native Garden; and our 2015 flourishing Vineyard of Riesling and Cabernet Merlot.

We also now produce Government House gin using a range of Estate botanicals. So, Mohammed, perhaps we should donate some for your 2025 Variety of Gins. I shall leave that modest gesture in support of Variety, with you.

But that's enough from me. We look forward to chatting with you and we wish you a very productive and successful Forum tomorrow.

Thank you.