

**LIBRARIES TASMANIA
TASMANIA READS WEEK 2024
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DRAWING ROOM, TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2024**

Good evening and a very warm welcome to this reception to celebrate Tasmania Reads Week 2024 on behalf of Libraries Tasmania.

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.

This is the second year of Tasmania Reads Week, held in conjunction with Australia Reads, which is a not-for-profit joint collaboration of the Australian Library and Information Association; the Australian Publishers Association; the Australian Society of Authors; and also, BookPeople.¹

The partner events this year in Tasmania should ensure a week that is not only high quality and great fun, but also involves a great variety of activities in local libraries across our island. These events are too many to mention individually, but they show how much effort and creativity has gone into this year's program. I congratulate everyone involved, whether behind the scenes or engaging directly with the public.

We all know why reading is important. Benefits associated with reading include better education outcomes, improved quality of health and wellbeing, and, of course, the pleasure of engaging with the text.

Tasmania Reads Week is a powerful innovation. Through Libraries Tasmania we are reaching out in particular to those who, very often through no fault of their

¹ <https://australiareads.org.au/about-us/>, accessed 13 March 2024.

own, do not appreciate what reading achieves, and generally at a modest or no cost.

Disturbingly, in Tasmania we have low literacy levels. Some 50 per cent of our State's population has inadequate reading skills for their daily needs. We need to continue to address this acute problem.²

This evening, we are represented by our State and local governments; our University; bookshops; writers' organisations; authors; 26TEN; the Royal Society of Tasmania; TMAG; and of course Libraries Tasmania. Collectively, your commitments to encouraging and fostering improved literacy skills are valued. Tasmania Reads Week aims to become a shining star into the future, as well as directly bringing the distinct benefits and pleasure of reading to many Tasmanians, of all ages and social circumstances.

Significantly, the designation of Hobart last year as a UNESCO City of Literature opens up considerable opportunities to focus on literacy as an agreed and identified problem. Indeed, that was an element of the submission of the Hobart City of Literature Working Group.

May I conclude by congratulating everyone involved in Tasmania Reads Week 2024. I see that your slogan for this year is: "Try something new!" Well, as Tasmanians we are certainly about to try something new – it's called our World City of Literature status!

Thank you.

David ... *[invites Jan Richards, Tasmanian Library Advisory Board Chair, to respond briefly, followed by Robbie Arnott, author]*

² <https://aetas.org.au/alarming-new-report-on-poor-literacy-levels-highlights-urgent-need-for-investment-in-tasmanian-schools/>, [September 2023], accessed 13 March 2024.