

**PUNJABI SOCIETY TASMANIA
CELEBRATION OF VAISAKHI MELA
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BRIGHTON CIVIC CENTRE, SATURDAY 20 APRIL 2024**

Good afternoon, everyone. I am very pleased to be with you today with my husband to celebrate Vaisakhi, the celebration culturally linked to the harvesting of crops in the spring.

I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather. 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 Vaisakhi celebration holds great cultural, religious and spiritual significance. It marks the first day of the month of Vaisakh and the solar transition to the constellation Aries. I look forward to seeing some of today's cultural heritage and associated folklore.

In the Punjab, as well as around the world, farming and agriculture are key parts of the cycle of life. At harvest time, farmers celebrate their intimate ties and bounds with their land. As farmers reap their harvests, they reflect, offer gratitude, and pray for continued abundance for their family and community.

Gathering around a community kitchen is embedded in these celebrations. The community celebrates the tradition of 'langar', the free service of food. It is a powerful connection.

For Sikhs, I understand this date also marks the birth of the new Khalsa Order by Guru Gobind Singh, in 1699. The name of this Order translates as "pure", and focuses on egalitarianism, non-discrimination, and doing away with the boundaries of caste, creed and gender.

Vaisakhi, I understand, also marks the idea of a saint-soldier under the new order, known as the Khalsa Panth. This title of Khalsa refers to whole life and spirit being solely with the One Universal Creator, thus making all equal, regardless of other attributes.

The Vaisakhi celebrations take many forms. Traditionally they begin at the gurdwara, a place of worship for Sikhs, with parades and processions through the town.

Children often demonstrate their skills in the martial arts, and bands provide uplifting accompaniment.

Yellow and orange are the colours of Vaisakhi and reflect the spirit of rebirth and sacrifice. I see many of you are dressed in these traditional colours.

Thank you for inviting us to join with you in these Vaisakhi celebrations. We are all proud of our multicultural society and our many culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

I wish you all my very best for these celebrations.