

**THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA
PRESENTATION OF THE 2023 M R BANKS MEDAL AND
TWO R M JOHNSTON MEMORIAL MEDALS
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MONDAY 22 APRIL 2024**

Good evening, everyone, and a very warm welcome to this Royal Society of Tasmania presentation ceremony.

I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina (moo-win-in-ah) 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.

Tonight, I shall be presenting three Royal Society of Tasmania medals: the M R Banks Medal and two R M Johnston Memorial Medals. I am also presenting a Royal Society of Tasmania Doctoral Award Certificate. You will hear more from recipients later with their presentations. However, I would like to acknowledge each briefly.

Dr Tobias Stal is the winner of the Royal Society of Tasmania Doctoral Award. Dr Stal is a geophysicist and his research focused on the Antarctic continent. Dr Stal will not present to us this evening, as his presentation is scheduled for a later RST meeting.

The M R Banks Medal is awarded every two years by our Royal Society of Tasmania to an outstanding mid-career researcher in any field. The medal is named in honour of the late Dr Max Banks, a noted Tasmanian geologist, former President of the Royal Society of Tasmania and a great supporter of the Society.

The M R Banks Medal for 2023 has been awarded to Professor Alex Bissember, who is an internationally renowned chemist, for his research on chemical synthesis, including new reactions and methods for the synthesis of new molecules.

The R M Johnston Memorial Medal honours Robert Mackenzie Johnston. After emigrating from Scotland, he became the Tasmanian Government Statistician in 1882, a position that allowed him to pursue his interest in natural science. He wrote numerous papers on palaeontology, geology, zoology and botany, many of which were published in the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*. He amassed a large private collection of fossils, ranging through invertebrate, vertebrate and plant fossils of all ages. Johnston served as Vice-President of our RST from 1897 – 1911 and from 1916 – 1917.

The R M Johnston Memorial Medal was established in 1920. It is intended for a scholar of great distinction in any field. It was first awarded in 1923. In the past 100 years, it has been awarded only 19 times (roughly every 4 – 5 years).

For the first time in the 100 year history of the R M Johnston Memorial Medal, two medals were awarded in 2023. The committee found it impossible to choose between the two top nominees, Emeritus Distinguished Professor Paul Haddad and Emeritus Professor John Church.

Distinguished Professor Paul Haddad is an outstanding and internationally recognised analytical chemist.

This is a double celebration for the Haddad family, as Paul's wife, Kerry, is celebrating her birthday today. So, a special day for Paul and Kerry.

Emeritus Professor John Church of the University of New South Wales is internationally recognised for his research on sea levels and climate change. He has advanced significantly the field of climate science.

We are very fortunate to have these eminent scientific leaders residing or working in Tasmania. Their scientific endeavours and achievements advance the international and national reputation of our University's teaching and research facilities. I acknowledge and congratulate each of our outstanding recipients.

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