

FEARLESS FESTIVAL 2025 GALA DINNER
OPENING ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
PRINCES WHARF 1, FRIDAY 15 AUGUST 2025

Good evening and thank you for inviting me to this 2025 Fearless Festival dinner.

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose land we gather. I acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of country. I recognise their enduring culture and deep connection to land, sea, sky, and waters.

It is wonderful to see so many young women here from years 10, 11, and 12.

Tonight, you will hear from some impressive speakers. I hope each of you can take away some ideas tonight to help you choose your career and future.

May I suggest four questions for you to think about.

First, what if you don't know what you want to do after finishing school?

Some of you may already know the work option you want to follow. If you're unsure, which may be the case for many of you, don't worry.

Not everyone knows from a young age that they want to be a chef, plumber, firefighter, doctor, or engineer. Also, you can change your mind. You can change your study or change your job, do another apprenticeship, or re-train. Your aim should be to find a job that suits you and that you enjoy.

In my case, after finishing school, I was unsure what to do. I wanted to undertake further studies and attend university, but I was uncertain about the career I wanted. Certainly, at that time, I had no great desire to be a practising lawyer. I thought about social work. It wasn't until I had completed a combined arts/law degree over five years, followed by six months of Honours in psychology, that I decided on a law path at the age of 22.

So, my advice is don't worry too much if you can't decide now what to do. Keep studying the things you enjoy or are good at. Also, mentors can be useful to help you think about and decide on your next steps. Perhaps, you may have met someone here tonight or over the past two days who has inspired you or suggested a work path. It is always good to find someone you can talk to. However, always make up your own mind and stand by your own judgment. Finally, try to focus on what is right for you. The training and career you follow are your decision.

2. What do you do if you face difficulties in a male-dominated industry or profession?

You may start work in a male-dominated industry. I certainly did. In Tasmania, in the early eighties, there were only a handful of women practising as lawyers. I had to navigate, at times, harassment, gender pay gaps and bullying by some senior male lawyers. How did I manage? At times, not very well. However, with the support of my husband and friends, I managed. I had a few scars, but they have faded.

I am pleased that since then there have been significant improvements in the workplace for your generation, with better leave conditions, better workplace policies and better attitudes.

However, if you encounter bullying or harassment, find someone you can confide in and don't hesitate to speak up.

I am sure many of us have stories of being talked over, ignored or patronised. If you find that your ideas are not being listened to, or your contributions at meetings are overlooked, or you are interrupted, you need to call this out. If you witness this happening to another female colleague, you should support her and affirm what she has said or ask that she not be interrupted.

3. What do you do if you are underconfident?

I am sure many of us here share, or have shared at times, that feeling. Many of us may be motivated by a fear of failure, rather than a drive for success.

This is often typical of many girls and women.

Personally, I always tried to overcome my own lack of confidence with one plan: work hard and prepare well. This should increase your confidence and your courage to speak up. So, my advice is, if you feel underconfident, try to speak up and take on challenging tasks.

I have found that facing up to your fears helps overcome them. I had a fear of public speaking, and still do at times, but by pushing myself to do it, I find that the more I speak, the less fear I have.

Take opportunities that come along, even if they are daunting and scary to you at the time. You may be afraid of taking a promotion because you think others will criticise or you think you are not good enough. Believe in yourself and go for it, you won't look back.

4. What do you do if you have a setback?

Be kind to yourself, rather than being over-critical. We all make mistakes. It is our attitude to those mistakes that counts. My personal motto is never give up. Always keep your dignity when setbacks occur. Also, always continue to work hard. You can learn from setbacks and do better the next time.

May I conclude with advice to be yourself and to be proud of who you are. Try to have a bit of fun too. A sense of humour is valuable and therapeutic.

Best wishes to each of you as you decide on your futures.