

**THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION, TASMANIA BRANCH  
RECEPTION TO CELEBRATE 50 YEARS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
THE AUSTRALIAN HONOURS SYSTEM**

**REMARKS BY**

**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

**GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MONDAY 6 OCTOBER 2025**

**VICE-REGAL SALUTE**

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to Government House for this reception to celebrate 50 years since the establishment of our Australian Honours system.

May I acknowledge 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.

Prior to 1975, Australians received awards in many categories under the British Imperial Honours system. That system required a recommendation from the Australian Prime Minister to the British Prime Minister, who would then pass the recommendation on to the Palace for consideration by the Sovereign.

On 14 February 1975, a new system of recognition of service formally began with the establishment of three cornerstone awards: the Order of Australia, the Australian Bravery Decorations, and the National Medal. The notion of a uniquely Australian Honours system was first raised in parliamentary debate in 1967. However, it was another eight years before Letters Patent created the new system.

The first group honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours List consisted of 110 recipients, including Joan Sutherland and Patrick White. Of that first group, nine

were Tasmanians, including one Companion, a former Premier, the late Eric Reece, and eight Members of the Order.<sup>1</sup>

Since then, our Australian Honours system has expanded to include 60 distinct awards that now include military gallantry, meritorious, distinguished and conspicuous service decorations, as well as other military and civilian awards. All are authorised through Letters Patent from the Sovereign, with governance and rules set by accompanying Regulations and Determinations. All are overseen by the Honours Secretariat in the Governor-General's Office.

The significant difference between the British Imperial and Australian Honours systems is that our Australian system is designed to be open and community driven. Anyone can nominate an Australian citizen to receive honours. Nominating someone is a chance to recognise our peers for their hard work, service and dedication.

Tasmanians continue to be recognised in the Australian Honours system. Of nearly 300,000 entries in the Australian Honours database, there are almost 3000 Tasmanians listed.<sup>2</sup>

As your Governor, presenting and awarding medals and insignia to recipients at Award ceremonies is always a special and happy celebration, not only for the recipients, but for family, friends and associated community members.

We have honoured recipients from a range of different backgrounds, and their areas of expertise are diverse, encompassing health and medicine, conservation and the environment, primary industry, state parliament and local government, media, education, the arts, military service, community service, sport, Antarctica, and many more.

Whether through bravery, innovation, professional achievement, or outstanding service, may I take this opportunity to thank you all for your contributions and to congratulate each of you on your well-deserved recognition.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/search?awardYear=1975&awardState=TAS> accessed 29 Aug 25

<sup>2</sup> <https://honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/search> accessed 1 Sep 25

May I also encourage you all to be proactive in nominating or encouraging others to nominate worthy individuals from all diverse backgrounds and all sectors of our community.

Congratulations and happy anniversary to the Honours system.

And now, please enjoy your reception.