

**OPENING OF THE INAUGURAL OFFICE OF THE  
DISABILITY COMMISSIONER TASMANIA  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
188 COLLINS STREET, HOBART, 25 NOVEMBER 2025**

Good afternoon, everyone. It is my privilege to join you today for this significant occasion, the official opening of the new office of the Disability Commissioner Tasmania.

Thank you, Cody, for the lovely Welcome to Country.

The opening of this Office represents a commitment to ensure that every Tasmanian may participate safely and with dignity in our community.

The position of Disability Commissioner was developed as part of the response to the 2021 review of the *Disability Services Act 2011*<sup>1</sup>. The independent statutory authority was established on 1 July 2025 under the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*<sup>2</sup>. It stands as a clear acknowledgment that we must continually improve how we protect, listen, learn, and advocate for the rights of people with disability.

May I acknowledge Mary Mallett, who served as Interim Disability Commissioner until April 2025, guiding the establishment phase for this office with dedication and outstanding advocacy.

In April this year, Catherine Whittington was appointed as Tasmania's first statutory Disability Commissioner, commencing formally in this role on 12 May.

While broad in scope, the Commissioner's work centres on three critical functions<sup>3</sup>:

First, driving systemic change, particularly through the regulation of Disability Inclusion Action Plans within government agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Notes provided by Trish Mullins, email to ADC 19 Nov 25

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Secondly, receiving and investigating reports of violence, abuse, neglect, coercion, and exploitation of people with disability.

And thirdly, monitoring and investigating systemic issues of concern to Tasmanians with disability, ensuring their views and voices shape the systems intended to support them.

Today's opening marks the transition to a permanent and purpose-designed home for the Commissioner and her team. This new office has been purposely designed with accessibility, inclusion, dignity, and wellbeing placed at its centre.

Some examples include adjustable-height working and kitchen spaces, wayfinding carpet, Braille signage, muted visual environments, remote-controlled blinds, adjustable lighting, and sliding doors.

May I acknowledge access consultant Michael Small, and all those involved in making this a welcoming space for staff and community.

To the team, and to the community advocates whose lived experience, persistence, and leadership brought us to this point, thank you all. I look forward to updates on your work and progress.

Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone.

I now have great pleasure to officially open these new offices of our Disability Commissioner Tasmania.

Thank you.