

**ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY, TASMANIA BRANCH
RECEPTION TO MARK COMMONWEALTH DAY 2026
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026**

Good evening, everyone, and a warm welcome to Government House to celebrate Commonwealth Day 2026. As Patron of our Royal Commonwealth Society, Tasmania Branch, I am pleased to host this reception again on behalf of the Society, and to read His Majesty The King's Commonwealth Day Message.

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 deep connection to land, sea, sky, and waters.

May I also acknowledge and express our appreciation for the pipers from the Derwent Scottish Pipe Band who played as you entered Government House. I am sure that we all enjoyed the rousing sound of the pipes as you arrived.

This evening, we are joined by representatives of various loyal societies and distinguished members of our community who champion the Commonwealth values that unite us. May I congratulate the President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Barry Smith, on the 60th anniversary of his Fellowship of the Society. Barry's service has been recognised by Honorary Life Membership awarded in 1996 and a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2017 for services to the community of Hobart.

As we reflect on this year's theme of "Unlocking Opportunities Together", may we recognise that the Commonwealth's greatest asset is its people. That is reflected by the range of guests tonight, from loyal and Royal societies to military and community representatives.

We must also acknowledge the leadership of His Majesty King Charles III, Head of the Commonwealth, with his unwavering commitment to the Society's principles. May I now read His Majesty's Message to the United Kingdom, Realms and the Commonwealth:

We join together on this Commonwealth Day at a time of great challenge and great possibility. Across our world, communities and nations face the increasing pressures of conflict, climate change and rapid transformation. Yet it is often in such testing moments that the enduring spirit of the Commonwealth is most clearly revealed.

Ours is a remarkable association that spans every ocean and continent. Embracing an extraordinary diversity of culture, language and faith, our Commonwealth family is united by shared values of justice, democracy, opportunity, compassion and mutual respect. In a world that can feel increasingly fragmented, this voluntary union of free association remains rare and precious – a forum for open and honest discussion and debate to help improve the lives of the nearly three billion people who call our Member States home.

Our Commonwealth of Nations holds untapped potential for prosperous trade between trusting partners. With nearly two-thirds of our population under the age of thirty, we are a family defined by youth and possibility. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that they inherit not only hope and ambition, but also a world in which they can flourish.

That inheritance depends upon the health of our planet and on the restoration of the natural world on which we depend. Across so many parts of our Commonwealth climate change is not an abstract or distant threat, but a lived reality. The stewardship of Nature, the protection of oceans and forests, and the pursuit of prosperity secured in harmony with the natural world are duties we owe not only to one another, but to generations yet unborn.

As we look ahead to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Antigua and Barbuda later this year, we are reminded that the great gatherings of our nations are strengthened by the daily endeavours of their people. What distinguishes the Commonwealth is not only what our governments resolve together, but what our people do each day in countless acts of service, enterprise and creativity. When leaders meet, they do so on behalf of millions whose quiet determination, resilience and generosity give true meaning to our shared endeavour.

Working together, we can ensure that the Commonwealth continues to stand as a force for good – grounded in community, committed to the kind of restorative sustainability that has a return on investment, enriched by culture, steadfast in its care for our planet, and united in friendship and in the service of its people.

This is the end of His Majesty's message.

Tonight, as we celebrate the anniversary of the formation of the Commonwealth, let us reaffirm our dedication to its ideals. Let us continue to work together to “unlock opportunities” for a more prosperous future for all.

Thank you, and please enjoy your reception.