

**INTERNATIONAL WOODEN BOAT SYMPOSIUM
OPENING SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE
KATE WARNER AM, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DECHINEAUX THEATRE, HOBART
SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2017**

Good morning and welcome to the Australian National Maritime Museum International Wooden Boat Symposium for 2017.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today’s Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

I opened the Symposium at the last Wooden Boat Festival in February 2015 and having just been appointed Governor of Tasmania it was one of my first formal occasions. I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed it and so I was very happy to be asked to return this year to speak to you again. So thank you for the opportunity to do that.

I welcome our international guests, including representatives from the Netherlands, the United States, New Zealand and Finland; interstate guests and our honoured guests and speakers from the Australian National Maritime Museum, the sponsors for this symposium.

My first Wooden Boat Festival as Governor was memorable for a number of reasons. First, at the Symposium opening, the first guest speaker, Meade Gougon, a world expert on wood laminates and adhesives, being an American and unused to Vice-Regal nomenclature, referred to me in his speech as Empress!

Secondly, there was a memorable moment when after the first session of the symposium Dick and I returned in casual clothes and sat at a table outside on the pavement and had coffee. At the same table there was a group of Queenslanders and we got chatting. Soon one of them asked me what I did. I hesitated, what should I say? I said, “I am the Governor.” “No,” he replied, “You’re pulling my leg, you can’t be.”

The third memorable event was accepting festival founder Ian Johnston's invitation to row his standing forward-rowing wooden dinghy around Constitution Dock. Ignoring the advice to never stand up in a dinghy, and the public service mantra "if you have to think twice don't do it", I accepted the invitation, rowed out of the dock under the bridge and returned without creating an undignified spectacle of the Governor falling in!

This is my second 2017 MyState Australian Wooden Boat Festival event. Yesterday my husband Dick and I boarded the Motor Launch *Egeria* or the "Governor's Launch" by which it is fondly known, to attend the parade of sail on our magnificent River Derwent.

Some 200 boats were led by the *Egeria* and we marvelled at the obvious care and dedication of skippers and crew to ensure those vessels were maintained to such a high standard.

And so back to the Symposium. The idea of the Symposium is to lend serious academic credibility and intellectual stimulation to a broadly popular festival and to allow an exchange of ideas and meeting of minds. Following the success of the symposium in 2015, we again have a fabulous and diverse line-up of international, interstate and Tasmanian speakers on maintaining, building, restoring and using wooden boats.

And there are some fascinating historical topics: the search for Cook's *Endeavour*, the *Batavia* story, piners' punts and their adventures and Aboriginal and Torres Strait watercraft. And I am looking forward to hearing Gary Wilson's presentation on what it would have been like to sail with Tasman.

What a long way this festival has come since the first wooden boat festival in Tasmania was held in 1994, the inspiration of founders Andy Gamlin, Cathy Hawkins and Ian Johnston. From a two-day festival of 180 boats, it is now a four-day event, boat entries have climbed to over 500, and the festival site has spread from Constitution dock right across the Hobart waterfront.

So it is that the Australian Wooden Boat Festival, now the largest event of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere, ranks only behind the *Brest International Festival of the Sea*, held every four years in France and which was the original inspiration for the Hobart festival.

Before I leave the podium, I want to tell you a little bit about the *ML Egeria*, the Governor's launch which turned 75 last year.

It is an 18.9 metre Huon Pine carvel Motor Launch with Teak combings and white beech decking. Designed by John L. Thorneycroft (c. 1937) she was built by Purdon & Featherstone, of Napoleon Street, Battery Point for the Hobart Marine Board. *Egeria* was launched on 20 October 1941. She was named after the *HMS Egeria*, flagship for the Hobart Regattas of January 1888 and 1889.

The Australian Navy requisitioned *Egeria* for harbour patrol in the River Derwent in June 1942. *Egeria* then worked as a naval auxiliary launch.

Initially built as the Harbour Master's Launch, she later became known as the Governor's Launch, conveying many distinguished guests, including Royalty and our Tasmanian Governors, around the harbour.¹ Prince Charles and the Late Princess Diana are among the royal guests who have been on board.

Egeria was 'sold' to the Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania in 2006 and has continued to be used as a Vice Regal launch.

She is crewed by the club's volunteer professional skippers and trained volunteer crews and is available for private charter. Income from these operations goes towards upkeep and improvement of *Egeria* as well as providing the opportunity for the community to enjoy her charms.²

I am informed that there have been thousands of working hours put in by a diligent and growing group. "Friends of the *Egeria*". This enormous volunteer effort was critical in getting this wonderful craft to its 75th birthday and it is in the best condition it has been in for decades.³ I only wish I could have such a facelift and look as good at 75!

In closing can I thank all of the Symposium presenters for their time and expertise.

I now have much pleasure in declaring open the proceedings of the 2017 International Wooden Boat Symposium.

¹ <https://ehive.com/collections/3906/objects/501066/egeria>

² ibid

³ ibid