

'ISLAND LIGHT' PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE
KATE WARNER AM, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
LONG GALLERY, SALAMANCA ARTS CENTRE, HOBART
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Thank you so much for the privilege of inviting me to open this exhibition of breathtaking photographs of our wonderful State curated by Wolfgang Glowacki.

I am finding that this new job of mine is expanding my horizons in so many ways. And I am appreciating that while I may know a bit about a narrow area of the law, I know little or nothing about so much. And it is so stimulating finding out about more, including aspects of nature photography, such as macrophotography and the techniques of night photography of which I was wholly ignorant until now.

In effect I have had two opportunities to preview this exhibition, first when we were sent two books last week: Arwen Dyer's *Luminosity* and Wolfgang Glowacki's *Wild Island*, and secondly, earlier today when I had the opportunity to walk around the gallery. These opportunities have caused me to think about and appreciate the important role that wilderness photography and photographs of our natural environment have and their benefits which go beyond merely the enjoyment of seeing something beautiful.

For me, a keen but not very adventurous bush walker, it brings back wonderful memories ... of Maria Island; Bruny Island; Mount Field, a fabulous walk to Twilight Tarn on a bright still icy winter's day; the fagus on Anzac Day; Cape Raoul; the Bay of Fires, and the wonderful photograph of kelp reminded me of slithering hysterically on kelp as a friend and I tried to drag ourselves out of the water after a swim from the rocks at the Bay of Fires.

And it has inspired me to try to see places I have not physically seen and to walk to places I have not yet walked: Reynolds Falls, parts of the Tarkine Coast, Albatross Island, the Myrtle forest in the Douglas Apsley National Park, and the Franklin River. Some of the places we can see displayed here in the gallery, I guess I may never be able to visit – pack hauling and bush bashing is not really for me. But at least I have seen their beauty because of these wonderful photographs.

Which demonstrates another function of these stunning photographs. For those who are physically unable to access these places, for health and fitness reasons, for example, or because they live far away, it gives them visual access at least. It brings remote and inaccessible areas of the state to the public realm.

Not only does an exhibition such as this bring back memories, or inspire us to visit these places ourselves, or be a substitute for visiting them if we can't, it also encourages us to be more observant, to look at the rocks, lichens and plants more carefully – to take the time to look at the spider web, a tiny flower or fungus, blades of button grass, the sky at dusk and dawn, the stars in the night sky.

An important function of native photography is educational – it highlights the exceptional beauty of our wilderness, our coasts, rivers, mountains and forests and the need to preserve them all. Encouraging people to visit these places to see for themselves can lead to a profound and meaningful environmental encounter and cause visitors to change their attitudes to the environment and conservation.

We know too that photographs such as these in this exhibition can be powerful politically. One picture can be worth a thousand words. This is demonstrated by the use made by the Tasmanian Wilderness Society of the Peter Dombrovskis's famous photograph, *Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend* on the Franklin River which is said to have played a part in the Hawke Government's victory in the 1983 election. The Australian Government went on to fulfil its election promise to stop construction of the Gordon Below Franklin Dam and it passed the *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983* which prohibited Franklin River dam clearing. This legislation, which was challenged by the Tasmanian Government as being unconstitutional, was upheld as a valid exercise of the external affairs power by the High Court. An important decision for the environment.

This exhibition is timely in many ways. Our State Government has just released for consultation its new Draft Management Plan for the Tasmanian World Wilderness Heritage Area. This is bound to be controversial – and while it would be quite inappropriate for me to pass any comment on it, I can say that it is important that we, as a community, have an informed, robust and sensible debate about what activities should be allowed in our World Heritage

Area between Cradle Mountain and Maatsuyker Island. This exhibition, by showing us the natural beauty of our state, encourages us to think about these things and prevents us from being complacent.

Congratulations to all 18 exhibitors of these wonderful photographs, and particularly to those who are exhibiting their work for the first time. I am full of admiration. I have never been much of even an amateur photographer – and Dick is not a whole lot better. A very isolated achievement was a photo he took at Three Hummock Island of a wallaby's ears silhouetted against the sunset. We sent it into the ABC and it was shown one evening as the backdrop to the evening weather.

I now have great pleasure in declaring open the Salamanca Arts Centre's exhibition 'Island Light'. Thank you.