

**MOUNT FIELD FAGUS FESTIVAL
OPENING SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
MOUNT FIELD, SATURDAY 23 APRIL 2016**

Good morning to you all.

Can I begin by acknowledging and paying respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of this land.

I am delighted to be here at the Mount Field Fagus Festival, and I thank Peter Mooney, General Manager Parks and Wildlife Service, and colleagues for their kind offer to me to officially open the Festival today.

And I offer my congratulations to the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment for its initiative and long planning in bringing together the many centenary events taking place across Tasmania through the course of this notable anniversary year.

The range of celebratory events is a true reflection of the physical, cultural and social importance of our national parks. Some of them that you will be able to enjoy are:

- the Wildcare Tasmania Nature Writing Prize, which receives entries from across the world;
- the Power of Parks Forum Series;
- the Australian Alpine and Snowsports History Association Annual Conference;
- Volunteers Celebration during National Volunteer Week;
- Bright Ideas – Innovations and Opportunities in Western Tasmania; and
- the Freycinet National Park Centenary Celebration from Saturday 27th to Monday 29th August, the 29th being the exact centenary anniversary date of the establishment of the two parks.

And we are going to enjoy a fabulous weekend right here, with music — jazz; folk and blues; bush dance — Aboriginal Culture Workshops in ochre painting, twining, and dancing; woodchopping and sawing demonstrations; guided walks; and children’s Discovery Ranger activities.

I also look forward to making presentations shortly to Westerway Primary School.

I will take a moment now to reflect on the history of the parks. In 1915 an association was formed with the objective of creating a national park. It came about in response to a letter that had been written to the press by a Mr W. Crooke, “suggesting the formation of a national park, to include the Mount Field lakes, the Lady Barron Falls, and the Russell Falls”.¹

So it was that on the 29th of September 1915 a meeting was held at the Government Tourist Bureau in Hobart, comprising representatives from a variety of groups including the Field Naturalists’ Club and the Tourist Association. The meeting’s outcome was the formation of a National Park Committee.

That Committee successfully lobbied the Parliament and the resulting Scenery Preservation Act 1915 made possible the selection of 27,000 acres for the proposed Mount Field National Park.

So much for the history. Today about 50 per cent of our island’s area is managed in national parks and reserves.

And, being an island, Tasmania has many endemic species of flora and fauna. One of which of course is the Deciduous beech or *Fagus (Nothofagus gunnii)*, Australia's only cold climate winter-deciduous tree and which is found only in Tasmania. Closely related species of *Nothofagus gunnii* are found in New Zealand and South America, and it is this distribution of *Nothofagus* that first suggested to scientists that these landmasses may once have been joined as part of the supercontinent Gondwana.

As I explained at the Power of Parks Forum, Mount Field has a special place in my heart and it has been a special place for me since my childhood skiing days when we stayed in the Government Huts at Lake Dobson – one of which was called Fagus.

As an adult I have done quite a lot of bushwalking here at Mount Field – Mount Field East; Lake Nicholls, the Rodway Range (once), the Lady Barron Circuit. The Twilight Tarn Circuit has been a favourite and especially on Anzac Day to admire the Fagus on the Tarn Shelf. Since my appointment as Governor, I have had other duties on Anzac Day! So last year, we were a little late and missed the best of the Fagus and vowed to come before rather than after Anzac Day.

And I now have much pleasure in formally declaring open the Mount Field Fagus Festival.

Thank you.

¹ The Mercury, Wednesday 2 February 1916, page 7.