

AN ADDRESS TO THE LENA VALLEY PROBUS CLUB
BY
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WIFE OF THE GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
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Wife of the Governor.

Thank you for inviting me to talk to you today.

I am often introduced as the wife of the Governor of Tasmania, which is in fact my title. It felt quite strange and old fashioned at first, especially as in a previous life, I used to be introduced as Head of The Friends' Junior School, which was quite self-explanatory and made no reference to being wifely or otherwise. "But what does a Governor's wife do?" people say. And, I have to say, it was a question that occupied my mind a great deal at the time of my husband's appointment. Decorating the hall, leading from the side entrance to Government House, are photos of past Governors. Walking past those photos on my first day as "wife of the Governor of Tasmania" I remember thinking "where are all the women, why are they excluded, for my husband and I have always supported each other in our work and I know for a fact that most of those Governors had a great deal of support from some very capable and effective spouses who contributed a great deal to the Tasmanian community in their own right. So, why are they invisible?"

Being the wife of the Governor is a curious role. You are not employed by anybody. There is no job description. But, at the same time, there are protocols and official duties that you are expected to perform. There are also

varied and diverse unarticulated community expectations, and care must always be taken to ensure that appropriate community involvement does not create an impression of arrogant intrusion into the Governor's role. Those expectations make you more than a volunteer but at the same time you do not have the benefit of the usual workplace environment of checks and balances, so you only get to know how people think you are performing, if things fall apart. And then they tell you in no uncertain terms, as has been the experience of some of my predecessors.

These were my thoughts as I started out in this role in 2008. I needn't have worried. My search for inspiration, precedents and mentors unearthed the stories of other Governor's wives, stories that allayed my fears and reassured me that any mistakes I could possibly make would pale into insignificance beside, say, the wife of Lt Governor Murray. Mrs Murray took a lover and was caught by her husband in a compromising position with the Inspector of Public works. A duel was fought, no one was injured and the Murrays separated. Mrs Murray then went off to live with a judge whom her husband had once imprisoned for drunkenness and total ignorance of the law. Mrs Murray eventually returned to her husband only to be dispatched again after complaints from Governor Macquarie, that it was unjustifiable of Lt Governor Murray to take her back, having published to the world her shameful and abandoned conduct. She then took up with a Mr Kent. "All Mrs Murray seems to have contributed to the development of Hobart is a little light relief" say historian Alison Alexander. Governor's wives, she says, had yet to create a role for themselves.

It seems some governors wanted to be rid of their wives. Lt Governor Davey tried to leave his wife Margaret behind in England when he sailed for Tasmania. However she managed to jump on the boat at the last minute. He had more success on his return voyage, leaving his wife and daughter in Tasmania un-provided for. Then there was Governor Sorell who left his wife with 7 children England living in poverty, and brought a Mrs Kent to Hobart to live with him instead “to”, and I quote, “the confusion and shame of all married women and the evil example of the rising generation” so that respectable women felt obliged to stay away from Government House.

Reading all this I was beginning to feel a trifle dull as a Governor’s wife and certainly no wiser about my role. But then I came across Eliza Arthur, who it appears was very well behaved.

In her book, *Governors’ Ladies*¹ historian Alison Alexander says that to a certain extent society’s expectations of the role of the Governor’s lady have changed commensurate with society’s expectations of all women. In the beginning when Van Diemen’s Land was a small fluid community competent people were able to use their abilities to carve out positions for themselves; this included women. Socially, people were not overly trammelled by custom. However, many were offended by the perceived loose morals of Governor Sorell and Mrs Kent. Sorrell was replaced by Governor Arthur, who tried to improve society’s morals. Governor Arthur’s wife Eliza encouraged the women of the colony to confine their interest to the home. Next, Victorian morality took hold and society became more

¹ Alison Alexander *Governor’s Ladies* Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1987

rigid. Lady Jane Franklin tried to broaden women's interests in culture, education, science and travel, but few women had her intelligence, education, money or spare time to pursue such interests. By the time Lady Denison arrived in 1847 the role of the Governor's wife was "to improve the tone of society and from a position of rectitude to provide an example of correct and polite living and to encourage this to be copied by the colonists". She was the apex of society and was expected to provide and attend balls and dinners. For the next century or so this was the behaviour expected of Governor's wives. It is always going to be a fine line between success and failure in the public perceptions of the way a Governor's spouse chooses to serve the community. If this is a tricky role in the 21st century how much more must it have been for educated women like Lady Franklin, born into the 19th century when married women were not permitted to own their own property, let alone have their own careers and mostly having to live through their husbands.

However, today increasingly those who fill the role of Governor's spouse, like me, have had full time careers and are just as likely to be men as women. It is my personal observation that the men who fill the role of Governor's spouse are likely to experience the same frustrations and limitations as did the female incumbents many years ago.

To put my role as wife of the Governor in context I thought I might tell you a little bit about my background, both personal and professional; something about the role of a modern Governor and something about the role I have created for myself as wife of this Governor.

My Family Background in India

My father always told me that I came to Tasmania in a washing basket! As a child this used to worry me. Was I like Moses? Had I been found in the bull rushes and rescued? Or had I been discarded in someone's dirty washing, or worse, had I been stolen from gypsies by my parents? But when I was a little older I found out that what he really meant was that I travelled from England to Australia in a bassinet along with my mother, 3 siblings and a governess. It was 1948. My father was a Colonel in the British Army in India. There, in 1937, he met and married my mother who, although born in England, had spent most of her life in India. She knew no other life. Her parents were married in India, in Lahore in 1906 and it was to there that her mother – my grandmother with two very young children and a new-born baby, returned, after her husband my grandfather - was listed as missing in action in France, presumed dead in 1916. My mother was then 3 years old.

After their marriage, with my father's frequent absences on active service, my mother acclimatised to the life of a memsahib with all its routines, protocols, servants and social life. Houseboats and summer houses in the foothills of the Himalayas was my mother's way of life. She knew Ghandi, Jhina, Nehru and Mountbatten. As the unrest grew in 1947 so did I, for my mother was pregnant with me when the date 15 August midnight was set for Indian Independence and the sad division of India. My sister still remembers the fear of the perilous escape by train in the dark of night to board the boat to England.

Childhood in Tasmania

I was born in Somerset England in 1947. England was war-weary. My parents were war-weary and heartbroken at having to leave India. War had left my father with persistent nightmares and my mother a pacifist. Australia seemed a very attractive option. And so began the long voyage for my mother, my three siblings and a governess, out to a farm in Lower Barrington on the North West Coast. My father joined us as soon as he was able, breaking his parent's hearts, for they never saw him again. Two more children were born in Tasmania, making me one of 6 with 3 brothers and 2 sisters.

My mother's sister, a music teacher had also emigrated and lived close by. Her inspirational teaching engendered in me an enduring passion for music while my mother taught me the value of learning through her own passion for literature. I had an idyllic childhood living on that farm on the North West Coast and I guess for ever after I have associated music and learning with love, warmth and belonging.

We moved to Hobart for our secondary education. I excelled at music and was consistently successful in Eisteddfods. I was a participant in ABC Concerto Competitions and a regular performer on the ABC National Program, Young Australia. I achieved honours in all my AMEB exams and had gained my A Mus A in performing at 16. A report in the Mercury 1964, predicted a future as a concert pianist for me. But, although offered a scholarship to Melbourne Conservatorium, all those years ago, I chose instead, to do an Arts Degree.

At 16, the life of a concert pianist seemed competitive, lonely and hard, even for those far more talented and skilful than I could ever hope to be. My parents were not wealthy and I reasoned that I needed to make a living and would probably end up teaching. Accordingly, I decided that if I was going to teach it would be better to have another string to my bow and complement my natural interest in music by majoring in my other interests, English Literature and Philosophy. My father believed university to be a waste of money as he thought I would “just get married and not use the qualification”. It was of course a self-fulfilling prophecy. I married at the age of 19 and in quick succession had 3 daughters and I applied my qualifications to their upbringing. My father died unexpectedly during my final year at university and my first daughter was born in the middle of my final year exams.

Eventually, I did go into teaching, but with music, as the second string to my bow, a string that got me my first job in teaching, at the Friends School. I taught piano at the Friends School while I trained, at the age of 30, after the break down of my first marriage, in Primary teaching.

Professional Life

Immediately on qualifying I was appointed as an early childhood specialist and music teacher at the Friends’ School and later became co-head and then Head of Junior School. I was there for 25 years; 15 of them in a leadership position, a position which allowed me to introduce curriculum changes, in particular the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program, an unashamedly values based, academically rigorous program

which benchmarked our students against others around the world, not just within the state. During this time I met and married my wonderful husband, then a very handsome leading barrister and now a very handsome Governor. We had a son, William, who is now 27. He specialised in International Law and is training for the Diplomatic Service in Canberra. As well, I have my 3 wonderful daughters who have given us 6 grandchildren and 3 wonderful stepchildren, who have given us 6 grandchildren. We are indeed blessed, and at the age of 64 I find myself in the curious role of “Wife of the Governor of Tasmania”, Mum to a combined family of 7 children and grandmum to 12.

What does the Governor really do?

In order to understand the role of the Governor’s wife it is necessary first understand the role of the Governor. The modern’s Governor’s role is rooted in English history because the English system of government and laws came to Australia with the first fleet in 1788. In 1901 those separate colonies became a federation of six States whose relations were to be governed to by a constitution which was passed into law by the English Parliament. That constitution came into force on 1 January 1901. But, even when Federal Australia was born the English Head of State remained the Head of Australia and the Head of each State.

The appointment

Because the Queen cannot be in Australia all the time she has to appoint a Governor to represent her in each of the separate States and in the Commonwealth. The appointment is said to be at Her Majesty’s pleasure, ie, without any time limit or until the Queen gets sick of the Governor and

terminates his appointment. However, in reality the Queen acts on the advice of the Premier or Prime Minister in the case of the Commonwealth in making the appointment and the prospective Governor discusses the length of his or her term with the Premier before the advice is given to the Queen. It is usually for 4 – 5 years (in my husband's case, 5 years) and then it comes to an end by the Governor tendering his or her resignation to the Queen.

For many years, then, the Governors acted as the Monarch's agents and were answerable to the King or Queen for the things that they did. However, in 1986 that changed when the *Australia Act* was passed. Among other things that Act provides that all the powers that the English Monarch has are exercisable by the Governors unless the King or Queen is actually in the State. So today, although the Governor is the Queen's representative, the Governor is not answerable to the Queen and can exercise all her powers without reporting to her unless she is *actually* here.

The constitutional duties

The first constitutional duty that the Governor has is to make all the laws of the State. To understand how this came about we need to delve into English history. For hundreds of years the English Kings and Queens were very powerful people. They acted as law makers, law interpreters, tax raisers, judge and jury and even as executioners. The Monarch's word was law and he or she was all powerful. However, by the 17th century the English people were sick and tired of being bullied and taxed and sent to war and generally pushed around by the King or Queen and, as you are all aware, there was an uprising led by the politician Oliver Cromwell. At that time Charles I was on the throne but by 1649 he had been thrown off it and

beheaded and Cromwell became the head of a republic. However, this did not last long and after little more than a decade, the English people called for Charles 1's son, then in exile, to return to the throne. It appears that exile was not too tough, for young Charles apparently enjoyed many mistresses, by all accounts more than one at a time, and acknowledged no less than 14 illegitimate children! However, the throne was very different when Charles II returned, for the Parliament forced him to agree to only making laws of which the parliament approved, and to only run the State with the advice of the Ministers of the Crown. So the constitutional monarchy was born and has persisted to this day in the United Kingdom and here in Australia.

In Tasmania the Constitution Act provides that the Parliament of Tasmania is made up of the House of Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Governor. The Governor's job is to sign into law the Bills that have passed the two Houses. They are not law until that signature is on them. My husband has the Bills sent to him by the Clerk of the Legislative Council a week or so before the signing ceremony and he reads them. If there is anything that he does not understand or he thinks is contrary to important principle he will raise it with the President and if necessary she will take it back to Parliament. So, like Charles II, the Governor only signs into law Bills that the parliament has passed, but that does not mean that it is just a rubber stamp operation. *(joke about what happens if he doesn't sign – off with his head)*

The next constitutional duty that the Governor has relates to the administration of the State of Tasmania. By law he is the administrator of the State. He appoints Ministers, judges, and senior police he declares land

to be a private timber reserve and . But again like Charles II he acts, this time not with the guidance of *Parliament*, but with the advice of the Ministers whom he appoints upon the advice of the Premier who is the leader of the party that has the majority in Parliament. The Governor meets with the Ministers, called the Executive Council, on a regular basis – at least once a fortnight. But again, this not just a rubber stamp job. Before every meeting he sits down with the Clerk to the Executive Council and goes through the papers for the next meeting and checks to see that they are all in order. For example he may be asked to appoint a person to the Resource Planning and Development Commission and the Act says that an appointee must be a registered architect. My husband requires proof that the nominee is in fact a registered architect and if there isn't that proof he will not deal with the appointment until he is given that proof.

The next duty of the Governor is to adjourn, or prorogue Parliament and dissolve the House of Assembly. He does this in accordance with the *Constitution* and the *Electoral Act* and again, on the advice of the Premier. It's his job to see that the terms of the Acts are complied with. Also, just because the Premier asks the Governor to call an election it doesn't mean that he will do so. For example, if the Premier advised the Governor that he should call another election because he/she didn't like the results of the recent one, I have little doubt that the Governor would refuse.

If there is a hung parliament as happened here at the last election – no party has a majority – it is the Governor's job to appoint a person - inevitably a leader of a political party, to form a stable government, that is, Ministers who will have the confidence, or the support, of the House of

Assembly. It is the Governor's decision to decide which party leader will form government. Whether that decision lasts is up to the Parliament to decide but the Governor's job is in a way, to get the players onto the field or into the Parliament, and then see whether that Parliament passes a vote of no confidence in the side that the Governor has chosen or not. This decision is made in accordance with any applicable statute law and in accordance with constitutional conventions that have built up over the years.

As well as those constitutional duties, it has long been established that the Monarch, and in this case the Governor, has a right to be consulted by his Chief Minister, the Premier, and to caution or encourage him or her. I can tell you that about every three or four weeks Premier Giddings comes up to Government House and has breakfast with my husband and presumably, they discuss current issues that Tasmania is facing.

A law lecturer at the University of Tasmania likened the role of a modern Governor to an insurance policy – the Governor is there to ensure that there is no constitutional wrongdoing and to take steps to correct it if there is. For example, if he or she thinks that the Government is not acting in accordance with the constitution – not following the law – then he may dismiss his Chief Adviser, the Premier, and dissolve the House Assembly, thus forcing on a fresh election. Everyone remembers the dismissal and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

So, like the Queen in the United Kingdom, the Governor is ultimately responsible for making the law and administering the whole of the State, but must do so by and with the consent of the Parliament in the case of law

making, and with the advice of the Ministers in the case of administering the State. The Governor is the bottom line. It's up to him or her to act with or without the advice of his ministers if there are constitutional impasses.

Ceremonial duty

The Governor has ceremonial duties to perform as the Head of State such as representing Tasmania interstate and overseas. It is the Governor's duty to publicly recognise outstanding service given by Tasmanians by conferring Orders of Australia, Police Medals, Fire Service medals and bravery awards, and to lay wreaths on occasions of remembrance such as Anzac day. It is also the role of the Governor to express the collective feelings of Tasmanians at times of community distress and discord and at times of community success and happiness. A sense of community, or common purpose, is vitally important to our wellbeing, particularly in times of challenge and it is the Governor's duty to foster this sense of community.

So, what does the Governor's spouse do?

As I said before there is no job specification. It is a role that you create for yourself although, there are protocols and official duties that you are expected to perform and expectations which you must intuitively meet as you support the Governor in his community role, as distinct from his constitutional role, in which it is proper that you play no part at all.

Official Duty

What then is the expected duty of the Governor's spouse? Together the Governor and his or her spouse carry out many official duties including receiving official visitors to the state, holding State Dinners and Receptions;

the beautiful house that we live in, is, in fact, a working house from which the Governor and his wife carry out their responsibilities. Although it is designated, by an act of Parliament, as the private residence of the Governor and his wife, we occupy a very small section of it, in a flat upstairs. An important part of the Governor's role is in promoting Tasmania, with Government House providing a venue not only for constitutional duties but also for cultural and business opportunities for the state. Such events and functions brought over 15,000 visitors to the house last year and provided an opportunity to showcase Tasmanian food (much of it grown on the estate) and beverages . *The Government House Estate is of enormous importance to Australia's national heritage, being probably the only Victorian and the only vice regal estate which has not been significantly encroached upon, which is maintained in its original condition and which has continued to operate in its original form for over 150 years.*

It is a great privilege to be part of the history of the Office of Governor and to honour that history, by preserving important constitutional conventions and other long held and important traditions that have brought such stability to our country, while at the same looking to the future. Our past makes us what we are and informs our future.

Community Duty

As well as those official duties the Governor and his spouse have a duty to interact with the community and to try to emphasise that the things that bind the community are stronger than the things that divide it. Together the two of them represent and have empathy with the whole Tasmanian community and encourage the enduring values of right thinking people, such

as mutual respect, tolerance, support and goodwill. The community duty of the Governor and his or her spouse is to do their best to encourage a high level of achievement in the arts, industry, education and sport, and in the service of those in need. It is also their job to convey, on behalf of the community, recognition and gratitude to those who deserve it. They do their best to encourage Tasmanians to be a caring society; caring for one another and caring for the wonderful environment in which we are so fortunate to live. They also should take whatever opportunity reasonably presents itself to promote our island State and thereby facilitate prosperity and progress for its inhabitants.

To this end I travel widely with my husband visiting as many parts of the State as we possibly can. This year we have attended 209 events around the state where we visited, opened or were otherwise involved in a range of state national or international conferences; meetings; concerts; sporting fixtures; orchestral performances; exhibitions; memorial services; agricultural shows; church services; cultural events and sporting events. We have also visited community organisations; aged care and health facilities; primary secondary and tertiary institutions; industrial and rural enterprises. We are in the very privileged position of having seen wonderful initiatives and optimism around the state. I just wish we could read more of this upside in our daily press.

As well as supporting my husband in his role I have specific roles such as President of Red Cross and the Hamilton Literary Society. I am Patron of a number of organisations such as Camp Quality, National Coalition of Women, and the Child Health Association. I am asked to open

art exhibitions and conferences such as Children's Book Council and the Australian Institute of Office Professionals, launch books for the Faculty of Education , deliver lectures, such as the William Oats Memorial Lecture and the Honore Deane Memorial Lecture, teach at University of the third age and talk to groups such as you, all of which I enjoy doing. I serve on the Calvary Community Council and I chair the Tasmania Antarctic Gateway Working Party which brings together all stakeholders in the Antarctic Sector in Tasmania to work together to raise public awareness, promote and grow Tasmanian's Antarctic Capabilities which bring over 170 million dollars into the Tasmanian economy.

I would just like to show you a photo story snapshot, by way of reflection, of some of the things I have been talking about. The accompanying music is from a recording of the TSO and TSO Chorus of Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*.

I have an interest in promoting education and the arts. I continue to sing as a member of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Chorus and together with my husband I am Patron of Virtuosi Tasmania, a chamber group of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, The National Book Council, and The Intervarsity Choral Society among others.

I am a member of the College of Educators. I have kept my teacher's registration and continue to teach a Parent Child Music Education Course and an adult choral singing group which I train each year to take part in a performance of a major choral work in the Sydney Opera House.

Making music has always been part of my life and is something I continue to do as part of my role as spouse of the Governor. I have been able to encourage and enable the making of music by continuing my work at Adult education and at Government House by; teaching the hundreds of school children who visit, a dance to do in the ballroom; or showcasing Tasmanian musical talent at receptions; or holding choral concerts and workshops by Australia's leading choral conductors and composers for young choristers, particularly those who wouldn't otherwise have access to such opportunities; or simply inviting Virtuosi, Elanee Ensemble and other young musicians to record in the ballroom. The house comes alive with people in it.

So just to finish, I would like to leave you with an impression of musical happenings at Government House. I have made a 6 minute picture story to show you because a picture is worth a thousand words! I invite you to relax and watch while you listen to *Handel in the Strand* by Percy Grainger, performed by my cousin, Australian pianist Geoffrey Tozer, with the BBC Philharmonic and recorded on the Chandos label.

Thank You