

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA TO OPEN THE 9TH REAL
ESTATE INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA'S AWARDS FOR
EXCELLENCE CEREMONY, MONA, THURSDAY 20TH MARCH
2014**

This evening it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Real Estate Institute of Australia's Awards for Excellence Ceremony. This year is the 90th anniversary of the founding of the National Institute, initially formed as the Associated Real Estates Institutes and Association of Australia, and the 9th time this Award Ceremony has been held. I understand that many of you have come from all parts of the other island and even as far afield as New Zealand. As Governor of Tasmania, it is a pleasure for me to extend a special welcome to all our interstate and overseas visitors.

I have to confess that every time I am asked to attend events like this one, I am reminded of one of the first dinners I attended as Governor. This dinner was held at one of those up market, rather posh hotels. It was a black tie event and the hotel was one of those places with a lot of different glasses and a bewildering array of cutlery set out at each place. The main course was roast beef, vegetables and an Idaho potato. Now, I don't know about you, but I am rather partial to Idaho potatoes especially when they are covered in melting butter. So, after the very tall, distinguished and aloof waiter put a pat of butter on my Idaho potato I asked - very politely, "Please may I have another pat of butter on my potato"? The waiter looked into the distance and said "I am sorry, sir, but I have orders from the kitchen to put only one pat of butter on each

Idaho potato." "Please, please" I said, "I would really like two pats of butter on my Idaho potato." Implacably the waiter intoned, "I am sorry, sir, but my orders are only one pat of butter on each Idaho potato." Suddenly, my customary good manners and humility deserted me and I shouted at him, "Look my good man, do you know who I am?" "No, I do not know who you are" he said without batting an eyelid. So I retorted, "I am the Governor of the State of Tasmania. I am the guest speaker at this dinner and I want another pat of butter on my Idaho potato." "Are you, sir?" said the immovable waiter. "And do you know who I am?" "No" I snapped. "Well", he said, staring at a far distant point over my left shoulder, "I am the man who puts the pat of butter on the Idaho potato."

Now, tonight there are 16 awards to be presented. Unfortunately, I am unable to stay for the whole of the proceedings and I apologise for that, but I see that 13 of the 16 are awarded for excellence in an aspect of the real estate profession. Excellence is a word of imprecise meaning and the primary dictionary definition, "the possession of good qualities in an eminent or unusual degree"¹ is no more definitive. I searched the Internet to see if I could see articulated a definition of the excellence that merited winning one or more of the 13 awards to which I have just referred, but I was - no doubt due to my own shortcoming - unsuccessful.

So, I thought about the criteria in so far as it relates to the profession that you all have in common, and I thought that

¹ Oxford English Dictionary 2nd ed

excellence would have to include integrity; that is, behaviour that reflects the values by which you live; behaviour that demonstrates honesty and commitment, not dishonesty and indifference. A person with integrity does not say one thing and think another. Integrity leads to trust and respect. I think it must be an essential ingredient of excellence. The next quality that came to mind was ownership; taking responsibility for one's own thoughts, words and deeds. A person who takes responsibility for his or her words and deeds is a person who earns the respect of others. I think that must also be an essential ingredient of excellence. Then I thought about commitment - the breathtaking moment of making a compelling decision and sticking to it. A commitment is the inspiration to take positive action and to overcome obstacles, and to continue to push on until the committed goal is achieved. Commitment is surely another essential ingredient in excellence. I think I would also add flexibility as one of the ingredients of excellence. Flexibility is the opposite of rigidity. When things don't go as planned, flexibility is a willingness to embrace other approaches. Flexibility is an ability to adapt to changing or new situations in ways that still result in an advance towards the committed goal. An ability to learn from mistakes and not see them just as failures is an important attribute when considering the quality of excellence. A fear of failure must be put aside to permit an embrace of new ideas and innovative practices, but if there are resultant mistakes that are seen only as learning experiences, then that is excellent.

Mix all those ingredients with a willingness to be a life-long learner, add liberal doses of empathy and tolerance and a dash of good humour and then I think you have a person who can be described as having the qualities of excellence as he or she goes about his or her real estate business.

I am confident that you have done just that this evening and that all of the winners of awards can rightly be described as people of excellence and are deserving of the congratulations that will shortly be showered upon them.

Accordingly, I have pleasure in declaring the 9th Real Estate Institute of Australia's Awards Ceremony open.