

**OPENING OF THE 128th ANNUAL ART EXHIBITION
OF THE ART SOCIETY OF TASMANIA
BY
THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
LENAH VALLEY – FRIDAY 3RD AUGUST 2012**

Thank you for inviting me and my wife to be with you tonight for asking me to open this most important event in the Art Society of Tasmania's calendar, the Annual Exhibition.

My wife and I are committed to using the many opportunities open to the holder of the office of Governor to promote the work of Tasmanian performing and visual artists whenever and wherever we can. And so it has been an honour and a privilege to accept patronage of the Art Society of Tasmania and by so doing continue the association between and the Society and the Office of Governor which I understand is as old as the Society itself – 124 years in fact. (The Office that is, not this Governor!) Your Society has a fundamental place in the arts scene in Tasmania. It provides a nurturing environment for artists in which to develop their skills and benefit from the advice of more established artists, and it also opens up valuable opportunities for all artists to exhibit their works. Accordingly, the Society plays a very valuable role in the promotion of the visual arts as an important part of the culture and the economy of this State.

The work of a visual artist is a very personal thing. The end result is the product of the artist's inner self and emotional expression

and to expose that work to public display calls for considerable confidence. When I was at the University's School of Visual & Fine Arts in Launceston the other week I said that to create a work of art which usually is an expression of one's inner self or an exposure of one's vulnerable emotions and for the first time to expose it to public view in an exhibition must feel a bit like taking all your clothes off and standing in the middle of the street. It takes a considerable amount of courage and that courage is to be admired and supported.

The arts play an important role in our lives. The arts are an essential component of every child's education. In addition to studying the arts for their own sake, experiencing and making works of art benefits students in their intellectual, personal, and social development. Research studies point to strong relationships between learning in the arts and fundamental cognitive skills and capacities used to master other core subjects, including reading, writing, and mathematics.¹

In 2006 a report commissioned by the Australia Council for the Arts entitled "Art and well-being" concluded that "creativity is inextricably linked to our wellbeing".² The report continued that "*Community cultural development*, involving a wide range of art forms and various creative outcomes, uses involvement in artistic and other creative processes as a way of exploring and expressing our cultures

¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/updates/040826.html>. Accessed 23rd July 2012.

² http://www.artsresearchmonitor.com/article_details.php?artUID=50265. Accessed 23rd July 2012.

and the values underpinning these cultures and our society.” The report went further and expressed the view that “Community cultural development processes can ... play a vital role in helping people to think critically about their experiences.” And that “engagement in community cultural development processes can [even] achieve and challenge government policy and decision-making”.

If the views expressed in the Australia Council report are right then the Art Society of Tasmania, established in 1884, and one of the oldest arts societies in Australia has been at the centre of the cultural development process of Tasmania for more than 120 years. Open to experienced artists and beginners, the Society embraces all artists, including calligraphers, ceramicists, fabric artists, painters, photographers and sculptors. Its vision is to be “a key player in the visual arts in Tasmania, having a meaningful role in helping artists by developing skills, educational and exhibition opportunities.”³ This eclectic approach by the Society, illuminated by its vision truly provides an important pathway for exploring and expressing our community’s cultures and the values underpinning those cultures and our society.

So this evening, as the Patron of the Art Society of Tasmania Incorporated I congratulate the President, the Committee and the members on the important contribution that the Society makes to our

³ <http://artstas.com.au/about-us/>. Accessed 23rd July 2012.

community. I thank the judges for selecting the works that are on display this evening and for identifying those of them that won a prize. But the last, and perhaps the most important thanks go to all the artists whose works are on view this evening, some of whom are not newcomers to exhibiting their work but some of whom are first time exhibitors and are perhaps feeling a little of that first time nervousness. To all of you I congratulate you for playing a part in expressing our culture and the values underpinning our culture.

I declare open the 128th exhibition of the Tasmanian Art Society.