

**AUSTRALASIAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT SOCIETY CONFERENCE**  
**SPEECH BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, MONDAY 3 DECEMBER 2018**

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to address you to officially open the 2018 Australasian Wildlife Management Society Conference.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land— the Mouheneener people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

Looking at your three-day program, with some eight distinct management areas, and the diversity within each, it's all too obvious how important wildlife management is and that's certainly going to be even more so as we move through the great unpredictability of anthropogenic climate change and global population increase.

Here in Tasmania we often feel blessed that – despite numerous clashes over conservation and economic activity – this large, temperate island, with a population of just 500,000, has large areas of wilderness unlikely to be inhabited by people and that therefore our wildlife is relatively secure, indefinitely.

As true as that may be, it belies the grim reality that our forebears targeted the thylacine as a supposed sheep predator and successfully rendered it extinct; and then came the great shock of the Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease, which has decimated wild devil populations.

I note that papers on the Tasmanian devil will be delivered at the Conference by Save the Tasmanian Devil Program Team Leader Sam Fox, and the University of Tasmania's Dr Rodrigo Hamede.

Dick and I have been fortunate enough to be involved, albeit peripherally, with the fantastic work being done by so many individuals and organisations towards devil recovery, and so I would like to say a few words about that.

This started at a reception we had in 2015 for the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program. We met many scientists involved in the program. The evening was particularly memorable because Dr David Pemberton, who leads the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program, brought along some orphaned devil imps he was bottlefeeding and I had the wonderful experience of holding them.

In October last year we visited the Wukalina/Mount William Wild Devil Recovery Project with David Pemberton, Save the Tasmanian Devil Program Manager in which disease-free captive-bred devils are released into the wild.

There we learnt much more about the devil, including their mating habits – mating is a violent affair in which the male bites the female by the scruff of the neck and drags her back to his den where she is forced to stay for up to a week until she is no longer in estrous (on heat). We saw a maternity den and a devil latrine, and two of the captive-bred devils who had been recaptured being examined to see how well they were faring.

And in May this year we undertook a field trip to Fentonbury with the Save the Tasmania Devil Program. Included in our group (which included David Pemberton and Sam Fox) was the President and CEO of Toledo Zoo in Ohio, whose organisation is contributing \$700,000 per annum to the STD program and whose zoo has three Tasmanian Devils as an exhibit to raise the profile of the devil and inspire others to help save it.

We observed as Dr Billie Lazenby, a young scientist with the STDP and a volunteer, checked the Devil traps that they had set the day before. The traps had captured three devils, all young 12 month-old wild-born devils. The reaction of the devils to being trapped is amazing to see. Once they are tipped from the trap into a sack they remain almost immobile, as if in a freeze response.

Billie carefully stroked the devil through the sack before gently opening it to examine the devil for evidence of devil facial tumour disease, to microchip the animal, weigh it, and take samples. She was able to open each devil's mouth to count its teeth, and examine its gums for any evidence of disease. All of this is recorded by the volunteer and the samples are placed in little tubes to be later analysed. And then I was able to take the sack and release two devils.

We were relieved that the three devils we saw were free of disease. The previous day two of the captured devils were badly affected by the facial tumour disease and had to be euthanised.

And two weeks ago we officially opened a new Native Botanic Garden to mark the 40th anniversary of the Tasmanian Devil Unzoo (formerly the Tasmanian Devil Park) on the Tasman Peninsula, where John and Caroline Hamilton continue to work tirelessly in helping to protect the devil.

They have a devil monitoring program at three sites in the bush where food is left and the animals eating it are captured in photographs to determine if they are disease free. No devil facial tumour disease has been detected on the Tasman Peninsula and the adjoining Forestier Peninsula was cleared of devils and disease-free devils re-introduced there.

In September next year we will be hosting at Government House the launch of a major book on the devil, a CSIRO publication entitled *Saving the Tasmanian Devil: recovery through science-based management*.

I was honoured to be invited to write the Foreword to the book, in which I note that the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* dated Monday 25 May 2015, published the Governor's proclamation declaring that the animal *Sarcophilus harrisii* (the Tasmanian Devil) be adopted as the Animal Emblem of the State of Tasmania.

While it may seem surprising that the island's world famous endemic marsupial carnivore lacked such recognition until recently, the proclamation was timely given the perilous circumstances of the animal, which has endured and managed to survive a remarkably tough evolutionary story: mainland Australian extinction; bycatch to thylacine killing and arsenic and strychnine poisoning of rabbits; indiscriminate slaughter as a supposed threat to livestock; and from approximately 1996 the onslaught of DFTD.

In conclusion, I wish you all the best for your sessions and deliberations and I hope you may find a little time to perhaps explore some of the island.

Thank you.