

**AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL FLAG RAISING CEREMONY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 12 JULY 2019**

Good morning everyone. And a very warm welcome to Government House on this auspicious day in NAIDOC week, the theme of which this year is Voice.Treaty.Truth.

I will begin as I always begin my remarks with an acknowledgment of the traditional and original owners of this land.

This is not to be a morning of speeches. Rather a morning of ceremony, poetry, dance and song. A ceremony of promise and hope. And it will end with us sharing food produced by the Palawa Kipli Caterers in collaboration with our Executive Chef Ainstie Wagner and her staff.

I would like though to begin with some personal thoughts about what it means to have the Aboriginal Flag permanently flying at Government House.

It is an acknowledgment that our history did not begin with the first European settlement at Risdon Cove in 1803, nor earlier in 1642 with Abel Tasman's sighting of Tasmania and naming it Van Diemen's Land. It is an acknowledgment that it begins long ago, more than 40,000 years ago, before Tasmania was an island when it was inhabited by our First People and its nations lived in splendid isolation from the rest of the world with a culture that European settlement did its best to extinguish. Aboriginal Tasmanians occupied, nurtured and managed this land for millennia.

It is an acknowledgment that our history includes a shameful chapter that should not be ignored. This chapter opens on 3 May 1804 when a group of Aboriginal people, including women and children, "probably on a hunting expedition" according to historian Henry Reynolds, were fired on by soldiers in the absence of their young commanding officer, Lieutenant John Bowen. As many as 50 were killed according to estimates at the time. Raising the flag here is an acknowledgment that the policies of the government between 1824 and 1864 tolerated active killing, forced exile and permanent detention of the Aboriginal people. It is a public acknowledgment that we own this dark past.

And it is also an acknowledgment that the extinction of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their culture is a myth. When I was a child the Encyclopaedia Britannica asserted that the Tasmanian Aboriginal people were extinct. This myth was widely propagated and accepted. The Aboriginal flag, flying here at Government House is an acknowledgment that Aboriginal identity and culture were not extinguished but remained alive and were nurtured as the stories of the descendants of Fanny Cochrane Smith and of Aboriginal women and European sealers in the Furneaux islands demonstrate.

And not only does the contemporary Aboriginal community maintain your Aboriginal identity, culture and Indigenous rights, you are retrieving, recovering and revitalising cultural practices and instilling in your children a pride in that culture. The songs we are to hear, the dance we are to see and the food we will eat demonstrate that retrieval, recovery and revitalising of cultural practices.

Permanently flying the Aboriginal flag with the Tasmanian flag symbolises moving forward together and working together for a shared future. It is a recognition of the unique place Aboriginal people have in Tasmanian history and society today. As Aboriginal artist Janice Ross said recently at a forum here at Government House of our First People:

“This ground holds [their] past, present and future. Their stories are still here, in the Earth, the trees and the wind, and they will always be here.”

Thank you.