

AUSTRALIAN WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL INC
2021 RECEPTION
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BALL ROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021

[Vice-Regal Salute is played]

Good evening and welcome to Government House to celebrate the Australian Wooden Boat Festivals.

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

May I acknowledge among you:

- John Bertrand, Australian Wooden Boat Festival Patron, and Rasa Bertrand;
- Steve Knight, Immediate Past Chair, Australian Wooden Boat Festival, and Lee Knight;
- Peter Higgins, Board Chair, Australian Wooden Boat Festival, and Dallas Manning
- Members of the Board, Sponsors, family members and volunteers.

Welcome to what has become a biennial reception to mark the incredibly successful Australian Wooden Boat Festival. Dick and I have watched with keen interest as the Festival has evolved and have both been very pleased to be involved to some extent in the program each year since I was appointed Governor.

The festival has certainly become a fixture on the Hobart waterfront every second year since the inaugural Australian Wooden Boat Festival was organised in November 1994 by boating enthusiasts and friends, Cathy Hawkins, Ian Johnston and Andy Gamlin. There are so many stand-out features of the festivals held over the next decade and a half, but I'd like to go through some of that history.

The fourth festival in 2001 was notable for a number of reasons. First, the move from November to February to take advantage of more settled weather and the Regatta long weekend was a great success with upwards of 320 boats registering for the event.

The three day format allowed for a new formula, with the introduction of the 'Parade of Sail' and other new events, such as specially written and performed theatre. This gave the Festival the substance to attract more interstate and international visitors to Hobart.

By 2005, 450 boats registered and the number of visitors to the festival again increased. 2005 featured the 1874 three-masted iron barque, *James Craig*, back in Tasmania after almost 30 years of restoration in Sydney, and the three replica Viking Ships which were transported from Denmark especially for the Festival. Five popular specialist boat builders from the Viking Ship Museum also joined the Festival to demonstrate boat building skills with their 'authentic' replica Viking tools and rope making equipment.

In 2007, with Steve Knight as Chairman of the Board, the event was packed with special features including, *HM Bark Endeavour*, the replica Dutch ship *Duyfken*, and for the first time in Australia, three magnificent traditional boats from Holland. A special 'Dutch Village' was set up dockside and was an absolute crowd pleaser.

2011 is worth a mention because it featured the restored *Gretel II*, the famous 1970 America's Cup Challenger, which is now berthed in Hobart.

In 2015, the event attracted 220,000 people to Hobart's waterfront over four days in sunny conditions with the temperatures reaching above 30c on most days of the festival.

The 2015 festival saw the renewal of the International Wooden Boat Symposium, which welcomed some of the world's foremost experts on wooden boat design, restoration and sailing. It was my first Wooden Boat Festival as Governor and I opened and spoke at the Symposium. The innovator of laminates and adhesives in boat building, Meade Gougeon, was also a speaker and, being an American, he did not know how to address me and called me Empress! I've been called many things as Governor, but have only been an empress once.

This festival was also memorable for me because festival founder, Ian Johnston, invited me to row his standing forward-rowing wooden dinghy around

Constitution Dock. Ignoring the advice to never stand up in a dinghy, and the public servants' mantra 'if you have to think twice, don't do it', I accepted the invitation, rowed out of the dock under the bridge and returned without creating an undignified spectacle of the Governor falling in!

At the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards 2015, the MyState Australian Wooden Boat Festival was named as one of the top three events in Australia, along with the National Flower Festival and the Melbourne Cup. Chairman Steve Knight accepted the award in Melbourne. The festival also won Gold in the Tasmanian Tourism Awards when it was named Best Major Festival or Event and went on to win the Hobart City Council's Community Event of the Year Award for its 2015 achievement.

In 2017, the guest nation was again the Netherlands. The Dutch were here to help us celebrate 375 years since Dutch navigator, Abel Tasman, first sighted the island that would one day bear his name. Eight colourful Dutch boats and 35 Dutch nationals travelled to Hobart. Dick is wearing the tie he was presented with by the Dutch visitors.

With 504 registered wooden boats, the 2019 Australian Wooden Boat Festival added a host of new attractions and welcomed a major presence from North America, as the Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building sent a team of qualified shipwrights to Tasmania, most of them visiting Australia for the first time. Their goal was to build an American boat, the Haven 12.5 using Tasmanian timber supplied by Hydrowood, at the Wooden Boat Centre in Franklin. With Steve Knight as Chairman of the Board and Paul Cullen directing the festival, the organisation celebrated 25 years.

Reflecting on all of that, it must have been an immensely difficult and disappointing decision to have to cancel the festival this year. Like you, our operations here at Government House have been affected by COVID restrictions and we have been wrestling with the competing need to keep our guests and staff safe while ensuring that our community and ceremonial roles are still able to continue.

To that end, we thought that you might enjoy the addition of the mini Australian Wooden Boat Festival display that you would have noticed as you arrived. The two small wooden boats were both hand built by relative amateurs at the process. The larger rowboat is a plywood and hard chine skiff named *The Walter Paisley* and was crafted by prisoners as part of the Risdon Prison inmates' rehabilitation scheme and exhibited in the 2015 Wooden Boat Festival. The prisoners worked under the guidance and care of the Wooden Boat School

in Franklin and donated the skiff to Government House. The smaller *Pea Green Boat* is a commercial kit built in 2020 by my husband, Dick, while we were all in lockdown. It is a Passagemaker Dinghy built from a kit supplied from Denman Marine in Kettering. The original design comes from Chesapeake Light Craft in the US and can be rowed, sailed or motorised with an outboard motor.

This evening we also recognise the service of Mr Steve Knight as a Board member, Vice-Chair and Chairman of the Australian Wooden Boat Festival. In 2000, Steve was appointed to the newly formed Board and in 2003 took up the role of Vice-Chairman. Soon after the 2005 festival he was elected Chair of the AWBF Inc. Board. In late 2020, for both health and professional reasons, he chose to retire as Chairman of the AWBF Inc, having served as Chairman from 2005 to 2020, including seven AWBF Inc. festivals and having represented the AWBF Inc. at Brest in France and Port Townsend in the USA.

During his time as Chairman, as mentioned, the AWBF Inc. Festival of 2019 was awarded the Tourism Tasmania award as being the best Major Event and in 2020, at the Qantas Tourism Awards of Australia, the AWBF Inc. Festival was awarded the best Australian Major Event and Festival.

Steve was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to community celebrations in the 2019 Australia Day Honours List.

On behalf of everyone here, Steve, congratulations on the success that your leadership has brought.

Thank you.