

**CEREMONY TO MARK ROYAL ASSENT TO CONSTITUTIONAL  
AMENDMENT TO RECOGNISE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE  
REMARKS BY HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR  
THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
MONDAY 27 JUNE 2016**

Good morning and welcome to Government House for this historic event bringing us together for a special ceremony to accompany the giving of Royal Assent to a Constitutional Amendment to the preamble to the *Constitution Act 1934* which provides for constitutional recognition of Tasmania's First People.

I know that Aunty Patsy Cameron is going to perform the Welcome to Country shortly, but I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, this time in the words of the amendment to the Preamble that we are here to celebrate:

“And whereas the Parliament, on behalf of all the people of Tasmania, acknowledges the Aboriginal People as Tasmania's First People and the traditional and original owners of Tasmanian lands and waters; recognises the enduring spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance of traditional lands and waters to Tasmanian Aboriginal people; and recognises the unique and lasting contributions that Tasmanian Aboriginal people have made and continue to make to Tasmania.”

I would argue that this Constitutional Amendment is not tokenism, that it is not in any way an end point but it is, as the Parliamentary Committee which inquired into the recognition of Aboriginal People as Tasmania's First People asserted, 'another step on the journey of reconciliation'.

There are a number of very recent events that suggest that this in no way an end point, but a beginning and that momentum is gathering for us to move forward.

First, there is the recently tabled *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) Management Plan* which includes the establishment of a cultural management group which will oversee implementation of Aboriginal cultural values management and provide the opportunity for Aboriginal input into the management of the World Heritage Area.

The second is the new Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery exhibition: *kanarlaritja: An Unbroken String*, which is both a celebration of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and the importance of preserving it. The exhibition explores the Aboriginal cultural practice of shell stringing, a tradition which has never been lost. It exhibits shell necklaces from the TMAG collection alongside contemporary pieces from today's makers. TMAG has also been running classes in shell stringing which will ensure that this cultural practice will continue.

I am the proud owner of this beautiful shell necklace I am wearing. I will explain how this came about. On the first Saturday in December this year Dick and I were lucky to be invited to Mannalargenna Day at Tebrakunna Visitors Centre, Cape Portland. There with some two hundred or so people, Tasmanian Aboriginal People and friends, we ate traditional food, mutton-bird and mutton-fish, watched dances and took part in string making. We celebrated the warrior Mannalargenna and the continuity of Aboriginal cultural practices. Aunty Patsy Cameron presented me with this magnificent necklace of maireener shells, black crows, oat shells and toothies.

The most recent indication that this Constitutional Amendment is just a beginning is the MONA discussion plan for Macquarie Point, a notable feature of which is a Truth and Reconciliation Art Park and Tasmanian Aboriginal History Centre which together will acknowledge the Black Wars and celebrate 40,000 years of continuous Aboriginal culture in Tasmania. An Aboriginal Advisory Group is envisaged with a leading role in the project – an opportunity to engage all of our Aboriginal community.

All of this indicates that this particular amendment to our Constitution is the beginning of a resetting of the relationship between the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community.

As Governor of the State, I am conscious that I too am part of an unbroken string which, through former Governors and Lieutenant-Governors, leads back to the days of Governor Arthur and the Black Wars. Symbolically, the table on which I will sign the Amendment Act was Governor Arthur's Table.

I am proud to be part of our parliament and our community that resets the relationship with our Aboriginal people.

Thank you.