

DAHLIA AND FLORAL ART SHOW OPENING SPEECH
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HOBART TOWN HALL, FRIDAY 8 MARCH 2019

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to officially open the 2019 Dahlia and Floral Art Show.

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.

I understand that this is the first show of the 2019 season of the Hobart City Council Floral Festivals, presented by the Hobart Horticultural Society and in conjunction with the City of Hobart. Congratulations are therefore in order to the Council and the Society for staging this spectacular visual feast combining dahlias and floral art.

And once again we have Madame Butterflies Relay for Life team relay of piano players raising funds for Cancer Council Tasmania. Such funds will this year support cancer patients through supplying wigs, paying for counsellors, helping with transport and equipment needed for treatment. Given my ongoing cancer treatment, I say three cheers to that!

May I also take this opportunity to welcome to Tasmania George Hoad, President of the Garden Clubs of Australia. As most of you will know, the Hobart Horticultural Society is a member of the Southern Tasmania Zone of the Garden Clubs of Australia. And I also acknowledge Mary Crowe, the Society's President, and Heather Pryor, GCA Southern Tasmania Zone Coordinator.

When Heather first wrote to Government House inviting me to attend here today, she noted that the Hobart Horticultural Society is the second oldest horticultural group in Australia. That sent us scurrying to the archives and the first reference I know of is from *The Tasmanian* newspaper of Friday 22nd March 1839, in which is stated that a meeting of about 30 people "do now form itself into a Society for the Encouragement and Improvement of Horticulture, and objects connected therewith in Van Diemen's Land, to be called 'The Hobart Town Horticultural Society.'" That means then that this is your 180th birthday year – most impressive!

And on 3rd December 1839 the new Society held its first exhibition of fruits, flowers and vegetables during the Regatta, at Pavilion Point – that’s along the slopes of Government House grounds down to the Tasman Bridge.ⁱⁱ Interestingly the prize list included a commendation for a yellow dahlia exhibited by ‘Mr Cox, [Junior].’ Clearly dahlias were grown in Hobart Town as early as 1839.

The dahlia, I have discovered, is native to Mexico and was introduced to Europe first to the Botanical Gardens in Madrid in the late eighteenth century and later to Britain. So it was not long before dahlia tubers arrived in Van Diemen’s Land.

I have been doing some research on the Government House garden including exploring the flowers that have been grown there over the years. And there are a couple of mentions of dahlias. In February 1926, there were dahlias in the garden but, according to the Governor, Sir James O’Grady, not of sufficient standard to exhibit in your Gladioli and Dahlia Show at the City Hall that year.ⁱⁱⁱ

A description of a garden party in March 1938 refers to massed petunias and dahlias in the beds cut into the lawn on the terrace, and in the 1950s, the cutting borders included several rows of peach coloured cactus dahlias.

Today the cutting borders in the vegetable garden have a variety of dahlias, cactus, pom pom and single dahlias and they are particularly popular with our florist Ineke Souris at this time of the year. The garden’s herbaceous borders feature many dahlias, particularly the red border on the left of the entrance drive approaching the house.

I am looking forward to viewing the show and to see what I can add to my two favourite dahlias: Bishop Llandaff with its dark foliage; and the mini button green pom pom dahlia which is so gorgeous in flower arrangements.

I now happily declare open the 2019 Dahlia and Floral Art Show.

Thank you.

i

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/232803587?searchTerm=%22Hobart%20Horticultural%20society%22&searchLimits=sortby=dateAsc> accessed 6 March 2019.

ii

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/8750224?searchTerm=%22Hobart%20Horticultural%20society%22&searchLimits=sortby=dateAsc>, accessed 6 March 2019.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gladioli and Dahlia Show, the Mercury 5th February 1926, p 8.