

**FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE GRANTS AND AWARDS 2021**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2021**

Good morning all. Don and I warmly welcome you to Government House.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our Aboriginal People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

May I acknowledge among us:

- Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary, Department of Health;
- Professor Anthony Lawler, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health
- Associate Professor Francine Douce, Chief Nurse and Midwife for Tasmania;
- and fellow Florence Nightingale Grants and Awards Committee members.

As your new Patron, I am especially pleased to be hosting the announcement of this year's Florence Nightingale Grants and Awards recipients.

The Florence Nightingale Grants and Awards Committee is composed of Tasmanian nurses and midwives. The Committee promotes nursing and midwifery education and research, and advances knowledge and understanding of practice. The Committee also recognises the achievements and contributions of nurses and midwives undertaking postgraduate study.

I commend our Committee's commitment to professional excellence in nursing and midwifery in our State.

The continuing global COVID-19 pandemic has put a sharp focus on the profile of our nurses and midwives and demonstrated more than ever your central and pivotal role in supporting and protecting the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The Covid pandemic has also added to your always busy work schedules. It has no doubt caused and continues to cause strain – in the workplace, at home, and for the mental health particularly of those at the frontlines of the pandemic.

I offer my thanks and congratulations to you all, on behalf of all Tasmanians, for your unfailing efforts to keep us safe. Next month our borders open and we enter a new phase in our protection from the virus. Let us all hope for community common sense, respect and vigilance.

The Florence Nightingale Grants and Awards we celebrate today are made possible through generous funding, principally through the St John's Hospital Association, with significant donations from Tasmanian Nurses and the general public.

The Florence Nightingale Grants and Awards Committee has a long heritage and was established in the 1950s, providing Tasmanian registered nurses with the financial opportunity through study grants to undertake postgraduate studies<sup>1</sup>.

The Committee's history traces back to the immediate postwar period. We have in our Government House files, a record of Lady Binney, wife of Governor Sir Hugh Binney, supporting what was then called the Florence Nightingale Memorial Committee. This Committee raised funds to send a Tasmanian nurse to undertake postgraduate study at either London University or the Royal College of Nursing. That was in 1947, with Lady Binney encouraging donations to "a button and market day in Hobart."<sup>2</sup>

I note that applications for our grants open each year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, International Nurses Day, which is also the anniversary date of the birth of Florence Nightingale in 1820.

I would like to make a few more comments about Florence Nightingale herself. In 1856 in the months immediately after the end of the Crimean War, a body called the Nightingale Fund was set up to raise funds by way of a "proposed testimonial to Miss Florence Nightingale."<sup>3</sup> In other words, a financial gift to her.

This proposal from London was sent worldwide including to Tasmania. Our then Governor Sir Henry Fox Young readily agreed to support it. However – in keeping

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<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Colonial Times (Hobart) Wednesday 4 June 1856 page 2.

with the character of Florence Nightingale – her response was, and I quote now from the Hobart *Courier* newspaper:

“... Florence Nightingale has declined to receive any personal emolument or compensation whatever for her eminent and devoted services to her country. She has requested that ... it should [instead] be invested for the purpose of creating and endowing an institution for the thorough training of nurses for the sick.”<sup>4</sup>

We may ask whether the financial origin of the grants and awards we celebrate today, trace back to a decision made by Florence herself.

You see behind me two portraits – of Queen Victoria and of her Consort Prince Albert. They have been placed there as a context for me to quote from an edition of the Launceston *Examiner* in April 1856. Here is part of the quote:

“A very valuable jewel had been presented by Her Majesty [Queen Victoria] to Miss Nightingale. The design is said to be from the pencil of the Prince Consort...The following inscription is borne on the reverse: ‘To Miss Florence Nightingale, as a mark of esteem and gratitude for her devotion towards the Queen's brave soldiers. From Victoria R., 1855.’<sup>5</sup>

End of quote.

Once again, my congratulations to the Florence Nightingale Grants and Awards Committee on your continuing very important endeavours promoting excellence in medical education and research.

Thank you.

David ...

[invites France Douce to the window lectern]

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<sup>4</sup> *The Courier* (Hobart) Saturday 7 June 1856 page 2.

<sup>5</sup> Launceston *Examiner* Thursday 17 April 1856 page 7.