

**“FROM THE SHADOWS” PROJECT STATUE UNVEILING**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA,**  
**CASCADES FEMALE FACTORY**  
**TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2021**

Good afternoon and welcome to this unveiling of a statue of a pregnant convict by Irish sculptor Rowan Gillespie on behalf of the *From the Shadows* project.

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:

- the Honourable Elise Archer MP, Attorney-General, and whose other portfolios include Minister Minister for Heritage;
- the Honourable Sarah Courtney, Minister for Health, Minister for Women;
- the Honourable Sue Hickey, Speaker of the House of Assembly;
- Hobart City Council Aldermen, Councillor Helen Burnett;
- Dr Jane Harrington, Acting CEO Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority
- Roseanne Heyward, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority Board
- Major sponsors [Federal Group TBC]
- *From the Shadows* Chair, Bob Gordon and his committee colleagues.

I have followed this and the preceding *Footsteps towards Freedom* projects since November 2015 when I met with the then Lord Mayor, Sue Hickey and Elise Archer, then Speaker of the House of Assembly and heard about the proposal for statues of female convicts to be commissioned by Irish sculptor Rowan Gillespie. And then, in late 2017, I had the privilege of officiating, along with the President of Ireland, as the four beautifully poignant statues commemorating the links between Ireland and Tasmania

were unveiled in the forecourt of MACq01. That site is the disembarkation point of convict women transported to Van Diemen's Land, and from there they walked up Macquarie Street to here, to the Female Factory to await assignment, or to be kept here if they were considered unassignable.

The statue about to be unveiled today is the first of the *From the Shadows* statues, the second stage of the project which, when completed, will form part of a unique and significant heritage tourism route linking sites integral to the convict story – the Hobart waterfront, the Cascades Female Factory and the Orphan Schools.

On one of Rowan Gillespie's visits to Tasmania, Dick and I were intrigued to watch him at work in the Conservatory at Government House as he measured, photographed and planned one of the statues for the *From the Shadows* project.

Just over two years ago I spoke at a reception event at Government House to officially launch the *From the Shadows* project, planned to include four more of Rowan Gillespie's sculptures to take their place, two female convicts here at the Cascades Female Factory and two of children at the New Town Orphan Schools. At that event we were able to view the maquettes of these sculptures, including of the statue about to be unveiled.

As I said at that event, the project really sheds light on the tragedy visited upon so many women and children in the foundation decades of the colony of Van Diemen's Land. Almost 13,000 convict women, together with 2000 of their young children, arrived in Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1853. On arrival the women were sent to the Cascades Female Factory to await assignment, and their children were taken from them and sent to the bleak and miserable Orphan Schools at New Town. Nearly 6,000 children, mostly the children of convicts, were admitted to the Orphan Schools from 1828 to 1879.

Convict women who became pregnant while on assignment were returned to the Female Factory to give birth and to be punished for falling pregnant.

A visitor to the Female Factory commented: 'greatest part of the women seemed to have been sent there to be confined in more senses than one, for nearly every one of them had a child in her arms, or by the hand' (William Howitt, 1858) To some observers, the female factories were seen as synonymous with convict mothers and their children.

Until the baby was weaned, mother and child were held together in the convict nursery which was attached to the female factory but at times moved elsewhere when outrage about the conditions of their confinement erupted. After babies were weaned, mother and child were separated and after serving time in 'punishment class' for falling pregnant, the mother was reassigned.

The nursery was overcrowded and often dirty, and mothers and their children received inadequate food and clothing. The rooms were damp and cold. Breastfeeding mothers were not given sufficiently nutritious food. Not surprisingly the mortality rate was high. In 1834, ten children died at the Cascades Female Factory in a six-week period. The death rates of children in the female factories was at least four times the level in the general community.

Children who survived the convict nursery were sent to the bleak and miserable Orphan Schools at New Town.

While they were under sentence, convict women were powerless to keep their children with them. Families were fragmented. The daily existence of a convict woman's child was controlled by the convict system. For many children, their formative years were spent in a range of austere institutions. Mothers and children lost contact with each other; many were not reunited.

The narrative of the pregnant convict woman highlights that there is much more to a convict life than a crime, a trial and sentence. The statue of the pregnant convict woman is evocative and challenging, and is designed to make those viewing her ask: who is she? why is she here? what became of her baby?

I would like to acknowledge the work of the *From the Shadows* project project team, chaired by Bob Gordon. It is an independent body with incorporated status and is entirely voluntary. It first met following a suggestion from Stephen Large, former CEO of the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, at the Cascades Community Advisory Committee that Rowan Gillespie be asked if he would consider creating a female convict statue for the Cascades Female Factory site.

The Cascades Community Advisory Committee, under the umbrella of the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority Board, chaired by Dr Dianne Snowden, was formed to promote the exchange of information about, and raise awareness of, issues involving the management and conservation of the World Heritage Cascades Female Factory Historic Site. The project was later expanded to include the Orphan School site at New Town.

Initially three statues were proposed: a female convict and two Orphan School children, a boy and girl. Following a grant of \$100,000 from the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure (auspiced by Andrew Wilkie MP) in January 2019, the project was expanded to include another statue for the Cascades Female Factory Site.

It remains therefore for me to unveil this latest statue that represents the next stage in the *From the Shadows* project and say a heartfelt 'well done' to each individual involved in this important historical and cultural international project.

Thank you.