

**TASMANIAN HERITAGE COUNCIL
21ST ANNIVERSARY REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BALL ROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2018**

Good evening and welcome to Government House for this reception to mark the 21st Anniversary of the Tasmanian Heritage Council.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land— the Mouheneener 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 Will Hodgman MP, Premier of Tasmania;
- Alderman Ron Christie, Lord Mayor of Hobart;
- Brett Torosi, Chair and fellow Tasmanian Heritage Council Board Members;
- Pete Smith, Heritage Tasmania;
- Janet Carding Director TMAG;
- John Fitzgerald, CEO, Tourism Tasmania;
- Kim Evans, Secretary, Department of State Growth.

And may I make the observation that many of you have had professional interactions with Government House and its Estate over the years, including Graeme Corneyⁱ in the production of valuable assessment reports in the 1990s; and Peter Spratt with regard to equally valuable current structural and fabric assessments.

Given that the Tasmanian Heritage Register is the key working document aligned to your business, let me for the record say how proud Dick and I are to be the current occupants of the Register's ID entry number 2,926.

The story of this Government House is considerably older than its actual age, which is 160 years this year. The building was first occupied in January 1858 after four-plus years of construction – but the determination to build a Government House here goes back to the very earliest years of Van Diemen's Land, when it was the far-flung outpost of New South Wales.

Here was visiting Governor Lachlan Macquarie's opinion in 1812, and I quote:

"His Excellency the Governor [has] observed with much regret, since his arrival here, that [Government House is] much too small and incommensurate, and being also in a State of decay, it is absolutely necessary that a new one should be built as soon as the means of Government will admit thereof."ⁱⁱ

As a result Macquarie marked out a site near this elevation, of which he wrote, and I quote again: "The view of the Harbour, the Town, and the adjoining Country ... is grand and commanding, and is, in my opinion, by far the most eligible Spot in the Vicinity of Hobart Town for erecting the Government House on."ⁱⁱⁱ

This provided impetus for Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur to commence construction on this site in 1827 – an intended two-storey building of 25 rooms, designed by John Lee Archer. I'll quote again, from a contemporary source:

"It was the intention of the Governor to have built himself a palace here, the plan of the house and foundations were laid, and a garden planted, but the project was eventually abandoned, owing, as I understand, to the great expense that would have been incurred before its completion."^{iv}

Something of the same happened again in the early 1840s when Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Franklin and Lady Jane Franklin chose a James Blackburn design and significant foundation and ground floor construction took place, over or very near to the 1827 foundations.

But work was halted on that second building – a Georgian design – and its walls were taken down. But its foundations and building materials were it seems incorporated into the magnificent William Porden Kay-designed Victorian neo-Gothic mansion that exists today.

So it is clear I (Government House, GH, GoHo, Gov House, Gorgeous House, Gloomy House as variously called) had a very difficult birth after a very long labour. In the spirit of the vision of the Tasmanian Heritage Council which is to ‘help[ing] bring Tasmania’s historical cultural heritage to life’^v and to create a voice for Tasmania’s heritage,^{vi} I want to finish with a tiny glimpse of my life.

It has been a fascinating one! I have experienced twenty eight very different Governors and their spouses and children, and in more recent years, grandchildren. I have been host to queens, dukes, princes and princesses, ambassadors, High Commissioners and heads of state. I have a lot of secrets from below stairs and above.

My chandeliers have swayed to the rhythm of running children, my rooms have been at times nurseries, school rooms, maids’ and butlers’ chambers, Executive Council rooms, and State rooms. I have had a Governor who habitually disappeared to lie and read in his hammock, another one who, from my windows, shot at cormorants who were stealing fish from the pond on the South Terrace.

My life is a political history of a penal colony growing to become part of a federation of a proud and independent nation. It is a social history of so much more: class, employment, gender roles and child-rearing, for example.

Importantly, I have been able to adapt and evolve, so that despite my age, I remain a vibrant and working part of Tasmania’s government and community life.

Thank you.

ⁱ Co-author of the *Government House Estate Strategic Asset Management Plan* (1994).

ⁱⁱ Government and General Orders. Head Quarters, Hobart Town, Van Diemen’s Land. Sunday 1st. Decr., 1811. L. Macquarie, Govr. And Comr. In Chief.

ⁱⁱⁱ Macquarie to Geils 8 February 1812. HRA Series 3 pp. 459-50.

^{iv} Henry Widdowson, *Present State of Van Diemen’s Land* (London, 1829), p. 27.

^v Tasmanian Heritage Council, *Strategic Plan 2015-2020*, 3.

^{vi} Tasmanian Heritage Council, *The Voice: Reimagine Tasmanian Heritage* (2018).