

**A RECEPTION TO CELEBRATE “HOBART HIGH TO
HOBART COLLEGE - A REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION”
GOVERNMENT HOUSE FRIDAY 22ND MARCH 2013**

It is a great pleasure for me and my wife to welcome you all here this evening to a reception to mark a centenary of education at the Hobart High School and later the Hobart College. As you all know 100 years ago the Tasmanian Government embarked on what must then have seemed like a revolutionary programme of secondary education; the establishment of one school in Launceston and one school in Hobart to provide public secondary education for Tasmanian children. It was referred to as an experiment in public education. Viewed by today's standards the educational options 100 years ago were very limited. Courses were offered for students to train as teachers, to qualify for admission to university, or to study for a career, in either commerce or as a mechanics. For girls, there was an additional option to study domestic work. However, it was a bold move at the time for the public purse to provide free secondary education for children over the age of 11; indeed something to celebrate. Today there are 57 High Schools in the State and 8 Colleges. Today we all take free public secondary education as a right.

The early claims that secondary education in Tasmania was equal to the best in the world may well have been not too wide of the mark 100 years ago but sadly that claim as long gone with 49% of Tasmanians aged between 15 and 70 found by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to be functionally illiterate and the State's year 12

retention levels being the lowest in the nation and falling. So, perhaps as we enter the second century of public education in Tasmania we should all resolve to rectify that state of affairs.

I was most interested to read Pierce and Smith's excellent publication entitled "Hobart High School to Hobart College, A Revolution in Education" sent to me by Greg Jackson. I quickly scurried to the back of the book and there in yearly lists of students enrolled in the then Hobart School I saw the name Underwood PG for the year 1950. I can't say that I had a glittering career at Hobart High School. I arrived a slightly bewildered 13-year-old immigrant from England and struggled to fit in. The Headmaster at the time, Mr Biggins, contributed to the education revolution by advising me and my parents that I would never achieve academically and the sooner I left school and got a job the better !! Fortunately my parents did not accept that advice and my only regret is that Mr Biggins was not around to see me sworn in as Chief Justice and later as Governor of this State. However, our children went to the Hobart College not long after it was established and there received an excellent education.

And to conclude on an even brighter note I congratulate the Old Hobartians Association and the University Foundation on the establishment of a new Old Hobartian Association Centenary Scholarship Trust. It is a perpetual scholarship to be awarded each year to a student from Hobart College for study at the University of Tasmania. The inaugural scholarship has been awarded to a 1st year

medical student, who I think is here tonight with her proud parents. She is Georgia Wulf-Rhodes.

So even though 100 years on there remains much work to be done to improve secondary educational outcomes in Tasmania, it is fitting that this evening we celebrate that revolution in State Education that was born 100 years ago. An impossible dream came true for so many – a free secondary education open to all children. So I invite you all to join me & my wife in a toast to “Hobart High to Hobart College – a revolution in education.”