

TASMANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK AWARDS
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2016

Good morning and welcome to this presentation ceremony for the 2018 Tasmanian Human Rights Awards.

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:

- Virginia Bashford, Committee Chair;
- Sajini Sumar and Committee members;
- Dean Winter, Mayor of Kingborough;
- Alison O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer, Migrant Resource Centre;
- Helen Langenberg, Manager Communities Sport and Recreation, Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- Robin Banks, former Anti-Discrimination Commissioner.

Today is the final day of Tasmanian Human Rights Week, which has been observed this year since Saturday the 1st and as most of you know was formally launched with an inaugural State of the State Address by Professor Tim McCormack, Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Tasmania.¹

Professor McCormack is a Special Adviser on International Humanitarian Law to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague – and so he is particularly well placed to be part of this important annual commemoration in Tasmania, which is centred around the United Nations Day for Human Rights, observed internationally today.

This date is celebrated to mark the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948.

As it happens, when Professor McCormack delivered his speech, at the Town Hall ceremony announcing the Human Rights Award Winners, Dick and I were in the far north-east of the State celebrating Mannalargenna Day at the Tebrakunna Visitors Centre at Little Musselroe Day.

This too is an important Tasmanian event in respect of human rights – because although it celebrates the life of that Aboriginal clan leader, warrior and negotiator, it is also a reminder of the tragedy of how the original inhabitants of this island were treated by the newly established British presence here.

Indeed the concept of “human rights” simply did not exist, and we can include the often extremely cruel and barbarous treatment of convicts in making that assessment.

We have come a very long way since then, but our world remains deeply flawed, which is why this annual commemoration is as important now as it has ever been. Those flaunting human rights need to be called out.

Because the blunt fact is that human rights are the birth rights of all people – the basic standards by which we can identify and measure inequality and fairness. Human rights are commonly equated with the rights set out in the two Covenants and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. And they are as relevant today as when they were first adopted.

The right to education, adequate housing, food, water, the highest attainable standard of health, the right to work and rights at work, as well as the cultural rights of minorities and Aboriginal peoples are all enshrined in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

The right to equality before the law, privacy, to life, security of the person, a fair trial, freedom of belief, movement, assembly and association are all given expression in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

This year marks the 30th year of Human Rights Week in Tasmania. Individuals and organisations are recognised for the work they do to achieve social justice and the fulfilment of human rights in Tasmania and elsewhere.

And the standards for these awards are high. The selection committee selects eventual winners through the extent of their activities relating to one or more of the following:

- 1.promoting human rights and peace through various mechanisms;
- 2.promoting equal opportunity and non-discriminatory attitudes and practices;
3. increasing community understanding of human rights for the promotion of greater respect, diversity, inclusion and harmony;
- 4.challenging human rights barriers and/or breaches.

As well, the following are taken into consideration in these awards:

- 1.the impact of the work or activity on increased knowledge, understanding and respect for human rights, including but not limited to equal opportunity and non-discriminatory attitudes and practices;
- 2.the contribution made by the work or activity on the removal of barriers and to the challenging of human rights breaches;
- 3.how initiative and innovative practices have been used; and

4.the amount of time and resources that have been devoted to the Activities or work.ⁱⁱ

To all you recipients I say: these are achievements of which you can rightly be proud and on behalf of Tasmanians I thank you for your contribution.

Thank you.

ⁱ <https://www.humanrightswEEKtasmania.org.au/>, accessed 7 December 2018.

ⁱⁱ <http://afairerworld.org/hrw/>, accessed 5 December 2016.