

Remarks at a celebration to mark the 35th year of publication of Island Magazine, Friday 13th December 2013

Good evening everybody and welcome to this reception celebrating Tasmania's very own Island magazine and the imminent launch of issue number 135. Now, I need to say right away that the current Editor of Island, Matthew Lamb — who is doing a terrific job — unfortunately can't be here this evening because he's recovering from minor surgery. But I am advised that he's doing well and will be back on deck very soon; possibly even tomorrow, when number 135 is launched at the Rosny Barn.

Island magazine was founded in Hobart 1979 as the Tasmanian Review. It sought no start-up funding and so it relied entirely on local sales, which makes it is nothing short of remarkable that not only did it survive as the renamed Island magazine, but that it went on to become a literary journal of national significance.

I think I am right in saying that Island has earned the same category of national importance as have Meanjin Overland, and the Griffith Review. They are of course, ranked as being among the best interstate literary journals. However each of them has the advantage of being published in a major Australian city. By contrast, Island has always had to battle the twin sales and marketing difficulties of being published in Tasmania, with its small population, while at the same time striving to reach a national readership.

However, on both counts it has succeeded admirably, and I understand that in the nearly 35 years since it began this quarterly magazine has published the great majority of Australia's finest and most well-known names in fiction,

poetry and nonfiction. In addition to that Island has also always had as a key part of its charter the publication of lesser known writers, both Tasmanian and from elsewhere.

Put all of that together and from a production point of view it seems to me like a recipe for extremely hard work — no wonder the editor is in hospital!

Now, Ladies and gentlemen, the Official Secretary to the Office of Governor, and for 5 years the editor of Island Magazine, David Owen, has suggested that I name everyone who has made, and who continues to make this magazine flourish. I said but that would be a very long list. And he said “I know - but it will help the budget along as we will not be serving drinks while you are speaking.” Well, you will be relieved to know that I dismissed that suggestion but I really do want to thank your key partners.

Principal funding partners are the Australia Council, Arts Tasmania, and the University of Tasmania Cultural Activities Committee.

Advertising partners are the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Pagan Cider, Domaine-A, Tourism Tasmania, UTAS, and Ridgeline Pottery and Boutique Accommodation.

The Hobart Bookshop sponsors the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize and in many other ways has been a close partner of the magazine since its earliest years.

And of course your loyal subscribers, whether gloriously rusted on or new, are vital in ensuring the continuity of Island magazine.

Well done also to Business Development Manager Kate Harrison, and my congratulations extend to the work of Island's invigorated and lateral-minded Board led by Chair Polly McGee.

There have been times when Island has seemed on the point of folding. I know that there were bitter editorial clashes about twenty years ago, and in recent years funding withdrawals threatened its closure. But here we are in 2013 celebrating the fact that this literary magazine continues to prosper and to effectively promote Tasmanian literature and culture.

So my warmest congratulations go to everyone who has anything to do with this eminent and intellectually stimulating magazine.

These days celebratory events at Government House are usually accompanied by a little music to set the mood and tonight is no exception. A quartet from your sponsor the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is going to put on a 10-minute treat for us all. Chris Nicholas, Hayato Simpson, Rodney McDonald and Ivan James will play the Nocturne from Borodin's string quartet no.2 and a movement from one of Mozart's Divertimenti for strings.

Ladies and gentlemen I command your absolute attention for just 10 minutes to listen to this beautiful music in this unique ballroom with its wonderful acoustic.