

**JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF AUSTRALIA COLLOQUIUM  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, FRIDAY 6 OCTOBER 2017**

Good evening and welcome to this reception for delegates attending the annual Judicial Conference of Australia Colloquium.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – those who have passed before us; and in acknowledgement of today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community, being the custodians of this land.

May I acknowledge among you:

- Justice Robert Beech-Jones, JCA President;
- Daniel O'Connor, Deputy President and Christopher Roper, Secretariat;
- Chief Justice Alan Blow OAM, and his Organising Committee colleagues, and conference organisers;
- And conference speakers who are here this evening.

I'll be brief in my remarks, insofar as you have heard plenty from me already today!

There's general agreement that this Government House is a significant national treasure and it stands as a unique symbol of this island's transition from the British Colony of Van Diemen's Land, to the self-governing Colony of Tasmania. That took place in 1856. This building was erected between 1853 and 1858.

Tasmania was still then very much a penal colony and a convict society. In the 1857 census, 60% of the adult males were convicts or ex-convicts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Reynolds, 'That hated stain: the aftermath of transportation in Tasmania' (1969) 14 *Historical Studies* 19-31.

Although transportation ended in 1853, the convict settlement at Port Arthur remained operating until 1877.

The question of the extent to which convict labour was used in erecting this building is not entirely clear. There was a belief that convicts should not be associated with the building which should be built by free labour.

Yet in 1855, when the building was halfway towards completion, the Director of Public Works, William Porden Kay, submitted expenditure details to the Legislative Council which suggest that convict labour was used quite extensively.

Expenses included £877 for the Superintendent of Free Labour and the Superintendent of Convict Labour was paid not much less: £662, which indicates supervision of significant number of convict labourers.

What we do know for certain is that at least one of its skilled stonemasons, James Rowley was a convict; and a ticket-of-leave convict, a young man aged about 22 called John Willson, painted the Dining Room ceiling – have a look at it and you'll see what fine legacy he left.

We also know that the total budget for the building and gardens, of some £47,000 blew out to about £67,000 – so some things never change!

On that note, do enjoy the reception, and feel free to take a look at our lovely State Rooms while you are here.

Enjoy your conference and take advantage of some of Peter Heerey's suggestions in the *The Guide for Innocent Mainlanders*, which I understand you have in your colloquium package.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Courier (Hobart), Friday 10 August 1855, page 3