

KENNERLEY CHILDREN'S HOME
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER 2019

Good evening and welcome to this reception to mark the 150th Anniversary of Kennerley Children's Homes.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land— the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and yet who continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

May I acknowledge among you:

- Craig Farrell, President of the Legislative Council;
- Robin Jacques, Chair of the Board of Management and Board colleagues;
- Andrea Sturges, General Manager.

As the Patron of Kennerley I'm very pleased to be able to be hosting this reception, with Dick. This is not least because one of my earliest patronage visits as Governor of Tasmania was to Kennerley in Timsbury Road Glenorchy. That was in January 2015, a little over a month after I had been sworn in. And it's good to see that many of those people we met on that occasion are here this evening: Robin Jacques, who was Chair at the time; Barry Titmus, who was General Manager and now a Board Member; Tony and Rhonda Spink, and Sharon Tolputt who were recognised as exceptional foster carers; and Donna Wright who was recognised as an exceptional staff member.

And it seems the wheel has come full circle in a way, with this Kennerley event taking place less than a month after my term of office has been extended for a year.

And speaking of time, well, 150 years is an incredible achievement. I thought that in the few minutes that I'll be speaking to you, I will quote two historical Kennerley facts, which tell but a fraction of your story but are illuminating all the same.

The first takes the form of a letter that was written in 1876 to a Hobart newspaper, not many years after the Home was first founded. I'll quote it:

Sir – Kennerley's Boys' Home is unquestionably the best conducted institution for boys in Tasmania, as they are part of the day instructed in various industrial pursuits, the other portion of the day being occupied with school duties. ...

As funds are required for the furtherance of this excellent object [I hope that] some of our wealthy citizens will visit, and relax their purse strings in favour of this most valuable institution."¹ End of quote.

It's worth remembering I think, that in 1869, when Kennerley Boys Home was founded, school was only compulsory for 7-12 year-olds and that school fees in State schools were not abolished until 1908. So while compulsory, even Primary School education was not accessible for many.

Moving forward to 1916, there is a very interesting account of a Kennerly garden fete at the Landsdowne Crescent property, the fete being opened by the then Governor of Tasmania Sir William Ellison-Macartney in front of a large crowd. The Governor unveiled a roll of honour board, carved into which were the names of Kennerley boys, including two who had died at Gallipoli.

A description of the home was then given out as follows and I'm quoting: "that since its founding in 1869, about 450 boys had been trained in it. A large number of these had become useful members of the community, and some were filling responsible positions in Tasmania and elsewhere.

“There were [however] still numbers who required such a home, orphans, fatherless, or the children of those who, from various causes, neglected or were unable to provide for them, as such boys, for the want of proper guardianship, would not get a fair start in life, ... The number of boys allowed to be in the home was limited to thirty, so that the character of a home rather than that of an institution might be preserved, and individual care and attention given.”² End of quote.

That fundamental decency and concern, as expressed over one hundred years ago, has carried through to today’s very well managed and responsible and well-regarded Kennerley Children’s Homes – and so I conclude by congratulating everyone associated with Kennerley. It is not often that an Australian organisation is able to achieve such a landmark as a 150th anniversary, particularly given the need to adapt to the many changes in what is accepted as an appropriate way to respond to children in need of care.

As Governor, I thank you, as no doubt, do so many young people who have been in your care and have gone on to have enjoyable and rewarding lives.

Thank you.

¹ Tribune (Hobart), Friday 8 September 1876 page 3.

² Mercury, Monday 4 december 2016 page 2.