

**LAUNCESTON CLUB DINNER  
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY  
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
LAUNCESTON, WEDNESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2018**

Good evening and thank you very much for inviting Dick and me to Dinner here at the Launceston Club.

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

You will recall that we last attended a Launceston Club dinner in October 2016. On that occasion I spoke to you about aspects of a Governor's role – legal and constitutional, reserve powers, ceremonial and community participation – and some of what I had been doing at that time to illustrate the varied nature of the role. And I also told you something about my career and spoke about gender equity.

In a way I will now deliver part two that speech, by saying something about events we specifically attend in the north of the State – and how, in times gone by, a very real endeavour was made to build a Government House in Launceston.

In the past twelve months Dick and I have travelled 15 or more times to the north of the State, most visits being to attend multiple events, although I do occasionally travel there and back in a day, depending on the event.

And next year is likely to involve even more south-to-north travel, given that it will be the last year of my term appointment as Governor.

So why isn't there a Vice-Regal residence in the north to support the obvious fact that half of Tasmanians live in the north?

Bearing this in mind, we'll now go back in history. Many of you will know that Launceston had a Government Cottage, erected by William Paterson the

northern Lieutenant Governor in about 1807 on what is now the south-eastern section of City Park. It served as the official residence in the north and also had other uses, for example Sir John Franklin allowed the Launceston Horticultural Society to use it for their exhibitions.

It is not entirely clear exactly where the cottage was but it seems likely that it was in the south-east corner of today's park where the Crimea cannon now stands.

In 1848 it ceased being used for governors and was rented out, to the first of a succession of tenants. Despite attempts to have the building renovated or renewed, it remained a rental property until in 1885 it was handed over to the Launceston Municipal Council and, being in very poor condition, was demolished and the land amalgamated into the park.<sup>i</sup>

Launcestonians and many other Tasmanians in the north didn't think it quite right or fair that, while they had to put up with a cheap Vice-Regal cottage, and then no place at all, in the mid-1850s a very expensive new Government House was being built in Hobart! This was a project approved by then Lieutenant Governor Sir William Denison, and an 1858 edition of the Examiner thundered:

"The new Government House at Hobart Town is an instance of wasteful expenditure that will be best known as 'Denison's Folly.' That 'able' governor projected an erection which will cost the country £80,000 when £30,000 was ample."<sup>ii</sup>

The issue then reached the Parliament and I will quote you a sometimes amusing record from a debate that took place in July 1864:

Mr. Murray said that in moving for the amount he proposed to ask for building a government House at Launceston. [At £,6000] it might be said that it was an extravagant motion. But when they considered how Launceston was situated they would say that it was a reproach that they had no place for the Governor to reside in ...The inhabitants desired to have the Governor among them a few months in the year. But now, whenever the Governor visited the North, he was unable to stay at Launceston, unless he put up at an hotel. But to show the inconvenience of this, [Mr Murray] might state that when Governor Sir Henry and Lady Young were staying at the Launceston Hotel, a person rode [his horse] up the steps and into every room in the house, to the great alarm of the Governor ...

Mr. Horne would second the motion, and considered a residence was necessary after the manner in which His Excellency had been insulted by the man riding into the inn. He knew there was a house there in Colonel Arthur's time, and he thought there should be a residence there now. The Governor could not give his entertainments at an inn, or receive the inhabitants there [and so on for some time].

Mr. Balfe was very sorry that he could not support the motion of the Hon. member for Launceston, although it was from no ill-feeling towards that place. He thought it would be unwise in the highest degree to vote a sum of money, no matter how small, for such a purpose as this. He wondered a plan had never occurred to any ingenious member [and this generated laughter in the House] whereby they could send half the Government House from Hobart Town to Launceston. He was sure that anybody would be satisfied with one half.<sup>iii</sup>

End of quote!

Needless to say contemporary Tasmanian Governors and spouses are extremely well catered for here in Launceston and indeed all across the island. But it is worth reflecting that back then the northern parliamentary members who proposed building a modest second Government House in Launceston, in the newly independent colony of Tasmania, probably had a fair point. After all there was a Government cottage in New Norfolk, and a very attractive Government House at Port Arthur which the Fox Youngs were obliged to move to when the old Government House was demolished and the new one was not sufficiently finished to occupy.

In conclusion, may I say how much Dick and I continue to enjoy this role. It is unique in what is able to be achieved, and we are both proud to be able to represent all Tasmanians in this way.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/LC/Armitage/citypark.htm> and [http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion\\_to\\_tasmanian\\_history/L/Launceston%27s%20Government%20Cottage.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/L/Launceston%27s%20Government%20Cottage.htm), both accessed 5 September 2018.

<sup>ii</sup> Launceston Examiner, Tuesday, May 26, 1858, page 2.

<sup>iii</sup> Mercury (Hobart, Tas. : 1860 - 1954), Friday 15 July 1864, page 3.