

LAUNCESTON - HOBART YACHT RACE PRESENTATIONS
BY
THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DERWENT SAILING SQUADRON
TUESDAY 31ST DECEMBER 2013

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here this afternoon for the presentation of the prizes for the Launceston to Hobart yacht race. And what it race it has been. This is the seventh time this event has been run by the Derwent Sailing Squadron, with assistance from the Tamar Yacht Club. Year one saw 17 boats over the start line, in year two there were 28. Year three saw a record of 35 boats starting the race to Hobart. And this year, there was a good field with 26 yachts starting the race. Many of the crews could be described as old hands at this race, but that is not the case for all the boats and for some, such as *Independence*, this is only the second race ever!

It hasn't been an easy race for any of you - old hands and beginners. Some you spent the start of the race just mucking about in the mouth of the Tamar River and when you did get going it was not long before you and the boats in front of you were hit by the westerly gale force winds that had been forecast. Congratulations go to Gary Smith and his crew on board *The Fork in the Road* who were able to press on and cross Storm Bay in a howling gale and total darkness, ironically crossing the finishing line in what turned out to be an almost dead calm. *Ballendean* followed suit and for a while it seemed as if they might be the only two boats to finish this year's race. However my congratulations also go to all those skippers and

crews that made the sensible decision and took shelter from the storm. A fine example was shown by one of the bigger boats in the race and sailed by experienced yachties. The skipper made the call to retire and led the way into Triabunna. There is no place in these ocean races for gung ho recklessness in the face of danger. Taking unnecessary risks with the lives of the crew is simply not on. The sport is tough enough as it is without doing that. For most of us land lubbers it would be frankly terrifying to be where you have been; racing in the pitch blackness of the night, falling off mountainous seas, and being unable to hear anything except the howling wind and crashing water. So as we pay tribute to your courage and seamanship it is appropriate that we also take a moment to thank all the families who have supported the crews competing in this race for without that support I doubt if many of you would have been able to take part in ocean racing. After all, it is the families who bear the brunt of anxiety and worry when the weather turns foul as it did for this race and they imagine that the worst has happened or is going to happen.

The remaining five boats decided to complete the race after the storm had died down a little and you are each to be congratulated on your sportsmanship and determination. I draw particular attention to two boats of those boats; Footloose, the smallest boat in the fleet, and Saltair that sailed this hard race two handed. A magnificent effort. Congratulations and welcome to Hobart. You have certainly earned a soothing ale and a good night's sleep.

The thing about the Launceston to Hobart is that it is, in effect, an exclusively Tasmanian race, this year with boats entered from eight Tasmanian clubs providing an opportunity for the smaller boats to experience ocean racing over a 285 nautical mile course and what an experience it has been this year; every bit as hard as any ocean race anywhere.

I extend my congratulations to the organisers, the Derwent Sailing Squadron and the Tamar Yacht Club and all the volunteers on coming out of this year's race with nothing more than the loss and damage of some gear, one broken arm and a few cracked ribs. Thanks go, as they always do, for the support given by all the sponsors of this race, especially the principal sponsor, "National" for without the sponsors, this race would not be possible.

I look forward to seeing you all again next year."