

**‘LESSONS FROM THE ARCTIC –
HOW ROALD AMUNDSEN WON THE RACE TO THE SOUTH POLE’
EXHIBITION OPENING REMARKS
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HADLEY’S ORIENT HOTEL, THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2020**

Your Excellency and Ms Kristina Larsen –

Thank you for inviting me to offer some remarks at the opening of this exhibition, ‘Lessons from the Arctic – how Roald Amundsen won the race to the South Pole.’

I wish to 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 who continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

Ladies and gentlemen, I’m sure many of you will be aware that His Excellency and Ms Larsen earlier this week arrived in Hobart on a two-day Official Visit to Tasmania. The complicated and devastating effects of the worldwide Covid pandemic may have largely escaped this island – for which we’re all very grateful – but as we know virtually all interstate movement closed down at once.

One result for the Office of the Governor is that where we would normally have about a dozen diplomatic official visit each year, in 2020 we hosted only the High Commissioner for Fiji, in February.

Hence this renewal of these important international economic and cultural links, through this Official Visit by the Ambassador of Norway, is more welcome than usual!

And how fitting, too, that Your Excellency and Mrs Larsen have stayed on in order to host this wonderful exhibition commemorating a momentous Norwegian achievement.

I am particularly pleased for the opportunity to make these opening remarks because it is my understanding that Amundsen did not receive the welcome or acknowledgment that he deserved when he and his fellow expeditioners arrived in Hobart on the Fram on 7th March 1912 having been the first expedition to reach the South Pole, which was achieved on 14th December 1911, five weeks

ahead of the British party lead by Robert Falcon Scott. As I learnt from John Williamson's recent Royal Society lecture, here at Hadley's he was at first allocated a room the size of a broom closet before his importance was realised when telegrams of congratulations began arriving from people such as George V and the US President Theodore Roosevelt.

A contemporary newspaper article in the Mercury of 16th March 1912 was critical of the lack of public recognition:

It cannot be said that any blame can be cast upon His Excellency (Sir Harry Barron) as he is laid on a bed of sickness, and away from the city. I think, however, that the Premier (Sir Elliott Lewis) and his Government are greatly to blame for not moving in the matter. The Mayor, also, cannot be said to his doing his duty by not moving that some public recognition in the shape of a public welcome, be given to the great explorer and his brave men. And what can be said of the Royal Society in the matter? They should have been the first to move the authorities 'to do something'.

Two days later Amundsen was at least invited to attend a meeting of the Royal Society, he was welcomed and spoke in reply. But that seems to have been the extent of his official welcome.

This year's Royal Society Christmas Lecture, 'Hobart and Amundsen: An Antarctic gateway illusion', delivered by polar historian, Dr John Williamson, this exhibition, at Hadleys and the presence of the Governor, together with the bust of Amundsen on the plinth outside the IMAS building, goes a little way to redress the omissions of the past.

It is interesting too that Roald Amundsen's other great achievement, navigating the North West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific which he achieved in 1905, was a childhood dream which had been inspired by the polar explorations of Sir John Franklin, who was the Governor of Tasmania from 1837-1843, and who died attempting to find the Passage. Ironically, Amundsen disappeared in the north polar regions not that far from where Franklin himself perished.

Thank you, your Excellency, Paul Larsen, for inviting me to this event.