

**MANNALARGENNA DAY  
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY  
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
TEBRAKUNNA VISITORS CENTRE  
SATURDAY 5 DECEMBER 2020**

As your proud and grateful patron, it is a great pleasure to be here walking with you all on tebrakunna country to celebrate Mannalargenna Day. Thank you Jo Cameron for inviting me to be here today on behalf of the Melythina Tiakana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation and circle of elders.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land—the Pairrabeena people. And I mourn the fact that there are no living descendants of the the muwinina people, who lived where I now live in Hobart. One of the reasons we have no living descendants of the muwinina, is because of the devastating impact of respiratory disease on our original peoples, a population without immunity from pneumonic influenzas. Covid 19 is a stark reminder of this devastation. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

And today we are here to celebrate the continuity of that culture and to rejoice in the resilience of the descendants of Mannalargenna, which has ensured that we have a thriving Tasmanian Aboriginal community and that our island of Tasmania is enriched by your culture.

This is the fifth Mannalargenna Day I have attended as Governor of Tasmania. And my last as Governor. Over these years I have learnt so much from our Aboriginal community about Aboriginal culture and the relationship of that culture to place, the land and the sea. And I have been inspired to read more, not only about how our original people lived their lives but also about dispossession and genocide.

Standing here at the birthplace of Mannalargenna, and in the light of what I have learnt, it is hard not to think, if only, if only different decisions had been made. There are so many 'if onlies'. To give one example, by 1830, while much of the island (including its offshore islands) had been distributed to settlers including

freed convicts as freehold grants, this north-east part of Tasmania had not been granted.

In opposition to Robinson's plan to create a permanent asylum on one of the Bass Strait Islands where all Aboriginal people would be sent, the Chief Justice, Sir John Pedder, argued that it would be inhumane to remove the original people of the colony to an offshore island. Deprived of their traditional country and nomadic lifestyle, they would pine away and die. He proposed that the Governor, George Arthur, make a treaty with Mannalargenna and other clan leaders to restrict the remaining clans to a designated area on the mainland where no settlers would be permitted and where they could continue to lead a traditional life.

The north-east was a suitable area for this. But this was opposed by George Augustus Robinson, who understood the intense spiritual bond between the original people and country, and he believed that the bond had to be severed if their souls were to be saved for a Christian God.

So instead Mannalargenna was promised that if they left the mainland temporarily, they would be able to return. I lament the fact that our colonial authorities made promises to our Indigenous people that were never kept and that they were deceived by such promises.

I acknowledge that it is not enough to lament the past, to ponder the 'if onlies'; it is not enough to acknowledge complicity in dispossession, destruction and denial that characterises the treatment of our original peoples. But I am confident there is a growing appreciation that the story of the past does not need to be the story of the future and that there is a desire by Non-Indigenous Tasmanians to do more, to take positive steps to redress the past.

I would like to wish you all Happy Mannalargenna Day, a day which promises to be one of great spiritual significance into the future and one which signals our changed understanding of history.

Thank you.