

NATIONAL BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2019

VICE-REGAL SALUTE IS PLAYED

Good evening and welcome to this reception to mark the commencement of Breast Cancer Awareness Month of the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

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 continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

I would like to acknowledge among you:

- Judi Adams, who does so much organisational and other work, and her volunteer committee colleagues;
- the Honourable Elise Archer MP;
- the Honourable Sarah Courtney MP;
- Bridget Archer MP;
- Debra Thurley, President Australian Local Government Women's Association.

We are very pleased to be lighting up Government House again this year to mark Pinktober and to host this reception for volunteers and supporters of the National Breast Cancer Foundation because it does such wonderful work funding breast cancer research with money raised entirely by the Australian public to help detect tumours earlier, improve treatment outcomes and ultimately save lives. Since the Foundation's inception, fundraisers and supporters have helped to raise \$162 million for research projects.

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia, with eight women dying from the disease every day. The good news is that survival rates are improving. The five-year survival rate was 76% when the Foundation started in 1994, and is now 90%.

However, while survival rates are improving the rate of diagnosis is increasing. One in seven women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime – this is up from one in eight estimated last year.

In 2018 it was predicted that each day eight women would lose their life to breast cancer – 3,157 people per year including 28 men.

Its incidence is such that we all have family members, colleagues and friends with a diagnosis of breast cancer. Just this last year one of our Government House staff has been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer.

I am wearing this beautiful wool and silk lace shawl, made by my dear friend and colleague Dr Julia Davis and given to me when she came to stay from Adelaide in July. I have spoken about Julia at a number of NBCF and Cancer Council events because as a breast cancer survivor, she is such an inspiration.

Julia was diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in July 2011. At the time we were joint investigators on a significant research project. From then until July this year (over 8 years) Julia has had 141 infusions as well as radiotherapy. Through all of this she has astounded me with her resilience and sense of humour and her determination, in her words, not to 'turn into a doom-ridden misery or into a cancer saint but to be as normal and ordinary as possible'. She has been more than ordinary and normal and, as things turned out for me, an amazing example of how to cope with cancer and chemotherapy and get on with life.

The last two years in particular have been difficult for Julia when the primary tumour in her breast and secondary tumours in her liver became resistant to Herceptin treatment and required harsh chemotherapy and then radiation to control their growth. In January this year the tumours in her liver grew yet again and her chemotherapy drug was switched from 'dear-old kindly Herceptin' to Kadcylla which has very unpleasant side effects including neuropathy, vision problems as well as nausea. When I told her of my cancer diagnosis on 1st January she gave me (via email) eight pieces of incredibly thoughtful advice. And before each of my eight cycles of out-patient chemotherapy she sent me

encouraging emails. Everyone, with a cancer diagnosis should have a Julia in their life.

Julia's new drug is working. It has cleared the lesions in her liver. But she is stuck with infusions for the foreseeable future and the side effects are getting worse. Because of the neuropathy, she is not sure if she will be able to continue her therapeutic handicrafts such as making this shawl. And yet, she does her best to find something to be happy about each day and to make sure that she is not wishing for something she can't have.

I cannot imagine what it would be like to have to subject oneself to continuous chemotherapy. How lucky I am to have had a cancer which was not just treatable but curable. This is of course the aim of the NCBF, namely to have a cure for metastatic breast cancer so that through investing in research it can assist to achieve the goal of no deaths from breast cancer by 2030.

Thank you again to everyone involved in this very important annual initiative. And now please do enjoy the reception.