Good morning everyone and welcome to the 2017 National Histology Conference.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today’s Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

I wish to warmly welcome all of you to Tasmania and I do hope you get a chance to explore our beautiful Island while you are here.

In preparing to speak to you today I read with interest about your organisation on your website and also read through your Conference Program which looks set to deliver an extremely diverse and fascinating array of presentations to you.

As many of you here today would know, the National Histology Conference in Australia commenced in 2003. Talks between the Victorian and New South Wales histology groups primarily led to the inaugural conference in Sydney. Since that first conference, the states with organised histology groups notionally agreed to hold the conference every two years rotating through those states.

I am informed that in November 2014, the Histology Group of Victoria ventured to Hobart for a state conference jointly held with the support of the local Taswegian histology population. What developed was so much more. Support came from across Australia both from delegates and trade representation. The event’s success would ultimately lead to pronouncing Hobart as the venue for the 2017 National Meeting.

I am very glad of that outcome because not only do I have the pleasure of formally opening your Conference this morning, my husband Dick and I also had the opportunity to host your Conference reception at Government House on Thursday night, which we thoroughly enjoyed.
For those of you who are from Tasmania you probably have heard about my background as a Professor of Law at the University of Tasmania for the majority of my professional life. Accordingly, when I am asked, as Governor of Tasmania, to open Conferences with specialties such as yours I sometimes struggle to think of what I, with a background in the law, can say of interest to the attending delegates.

So today I thought I would tell you about how your chosen field of study is creating huge inroads to the very existence of one very important Tasmanian emblem, the Tasmanian Devil.¹

As a Tasmanian I have been well aware of the facial tumours suffered by many Tasmanian Devils which has threatened to wipe out their entire population. And due to a visit to the wukalina/Mount William Wild Devil Recovery Project recently Dick and I met with Dr David Pemberton and some of his team and were given a huge amount of information about the issues affecting the devil population here in Tasmania. Dr Pemberton is the manager of the Save the Tasmanian Devil program, a part of which is disease diagnostics.²

From their website I learned that at the Animal Health Laboratories (AHL), the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment scientists have collected and analysed blood, tissue and tumour samples from hundreds of Tasmanian devils, allowing a growing understanding of the nature and origin of Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD). Through this work, and the work of collaborators, we now know the tumour is of nerve cell origin and is spread between devils by direct cell transfer. The initial published work in the November 2006 editions of Veterinary Pathology and Nature established these facts.³

I also read on the website that published work in Science⁴ (2010) confirms the possible nerve cell origins of the tumour using genetic techniques. Other genetic work undertaken by the AHL has shown a continuing genetic evolution

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³ ibid
⁴ [http://search.sciencemag.org/?fulltext=Tasmanian&issue=5961&journal_search_keyword_go_x=8&journal_search_keyword_go_y=9&journal_search_keyword_go=go](http://search.sciencemag.org/?fulltext=Tasmanian&issue=5961&journal_search_keyword_go_x=8&journal_search_keyword_go_y=9&journal_search_keyword_go=go)
of the tumour and unravelling the significance of this finding is an ongoing part of our work.⁵

AHL's diagnostic work continues on a daily basis supporting many aspects of the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program (E.g. disease suppression, captive animal health monitoring and treatment trials) and has facilitated the establishment of a data base of information and tissue archive of DFTD cases for many ongoing projects and future work. They are also developing much better tools for tumour diagnosis and assessment of health in Tasmanian devils.⁶

So for that reason I am very pleased to have been asked to come here today, not only to be able to tell you how your field of study is making such a positive impact on one of our very precious animals here in Tasmania, but to also commend you in your work because of your impact on the lives of so many people, the environment, the list goes on, given your research and diagnostic application of what you see under the microscope!

In closing, I which you a successful conference and again commend you on this important field of study and work.

Thank you

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⁶ ibid