

**OATLANDS COMMISSARIAT RESTORATION PROJECT**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**OATLANDS HIGH STREET, SATURDAY 1 JUNE 2019**

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

And may I make an observation on this point of paying such respect. It is a sombre point, but worth noting, and that is that in the early decades of Van Diemen's Land, settlements such as this one were part of that dispossession. So for example, and I'm quoting a UTAS doctoral thesis here, "numerous were the military roving parties comprising soldiers and constables, which had been independently embarking on roving missions from at least the winter of 1828. In the Oatlands district, for instance, there were six military detachments 'searching for the natives'".<sup>i</sup>

And there is a report from Oatlands police magistrate Thomas Anstey, reporting on a roving military party carrying out an ambush of Aborigines at Tooms Lake which related that after surrounding a group of twenty or so Aboriginal people, several were killed and a woman and boy were taken alive."<sup>ii</sup>

It is indeed sobering and sombre to recall that the restored Commissariat which I am opening today was built to store clothing, rations and equipment to allow the military, including the roving parties, to function.

This is of course part of our collective history which we reflect upon and commemorate in many ways and it is important I think, to connect not only with our convict history but also with our Aboriginal history.

During our municipal visit to Oatlands in 2017, Dick and I had the opportunity to see both the Commissariat and the 1870s cottage with its 1880s shopfront extension when the restoration work was underway. Restoration and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is a passion of Dick's, and of mine, and it exciting to see that the Commissariat is to be used by the Centre for Heritage at Oatlands as a training space for the Heritage Education and Skills Centre and that the

cottage and shop is seeing new life by a co-operative of local craftspeople and artisans.

Keeping alive these traditional skills is vital to the preservation of our built heritage. I would like to congratulate the Southern Midlands Council and Brad Williams, manager of Heritage Projects, for acquiring these properties, restoring them and providing a vibrant reuse when they could have been left to gradually deteriorate beyond repair as some of the other buildings on the site, such as the Guard House, have done.

It is now my honour to formally declare open the Oatlands Commissariat and Heritage Hub.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Clements, Nicholas, *Frontier Conflict in Van Diemen's Land*, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Tasmania January 2013, page 133; and also quoting the *Hobart Town Courier*, 13 December 1828, p. 2.

<sup>ii</sup> Clements, op. cit., page 135. [Danvers to Anstey, 9 December 1828, TAHO, CSO1/320, section E.]