



**SPEECH**

**OF**

**The Governor**

**Her Excellency**

**The Honourable Barbara Baker AC**

**FOR THE**

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**FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

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**ON**

**Tuesday, 22 June 2021**

**Mr President (elect) and honourable members of the Legislative Council, Mr Speaker and members of the House of Assembly,**

As the 29th Governor of this State I welcome you to the first session of the 50th Parliament of Tasmania.

The State Election on 1 May delivered a significant and historic outcome. For the first time in Tasmania's history a majority Liberal Government was elected by the people of this State for a consecutive third term.

It is testament to the hard work of this Government, which over the past seven years has built a stronger, more resilient Tasmania, and steered our State safely through the ongoing threat of a global pandemic.

This was reflected in the unprecedented personal endorsement for the Honourable Peter Gutwein, Premier of Tasmania, who received overwhelming support from Tasmanians.

I acknowledge and welcome the new members to the House of Assembly, along with the new Member for Windermere to the Legislative Council.

I would also like to acknowledge and pay tribute to my predecessor, the former Governor, Professor Kate Warner AC, for her commitment to the role, through challenging personal times, as well as through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Professor Warner's tenure will be remembered for her connection and commitment to many grassroots issues of importance to Tasmanians, with a passionate and strong focus on creating a more inclusive Tasmania.

My Government has a clear vision for Tasmania to be a state of opportunity for all who call Tasmania home, no matter who you are, where you live, your circumstance or background.

This is underpinned by a strong plan to secure Tasmania's future with a focus on: making the decisions necessary to continue keeping Tasmanians safe from COVID-19; delivering a more diverse and resilient Tasmanian economy to create jobs; delivering the revenue we need to protect against future challenges; and continuing our record investment into essential services.

Importantly, we will ensure young Tasmanians can get the skills, training, apprenticeships and jobs for their future here in Tasmania.

We are so very fortunate to call Tasmania home. As we see the images and hear the stories from other parts of the world, where COVID-19 has devastated communities, claiming more than 3.8 million lives, it is a stark and very real reminder that we cannot be complacent, and we must continue to follow the advice of our Public Health officials.

Tasmania is one of the safest places on the planet and we must all continue to do our bit to keep it so.

Together with our vaccination strategy, we have in place our COVID safeguards to manage cases both here in Tasmania should they occur, as well as the risk of outbreaks in other jurisdictions on our State, as we have seen recently in Victoria.

I would like to acknowledge the incredible efforts of our public health and health staff, our frontline staff, and all those in our community who work hard every day to keep Tasmanians safe from the risk of COVID-19.

My Government took significant steps to keep Tasmanians safe from the pandemic, balancing both a health and an economic crisis. Together with economic support packages, the hard work done over the past seven years to build a more resilient Tasmanian economy, and the initiatives taken to stimulate Tasmania's economy through the pandemic, we have placed our State in a strong position for recovery.

There are 25,000 more jobs in Tasmania now, compared to when my Government took office in 2014, and in fact, there are more Tasmanian jobs now than before the pandemic.

Our State is performing well across a number of key performance indicators, with job vacancies, exports and retail trade all increasing according to recent data reports.

However, now is not the time to walk the complacent middle path, because as the Premier has said on many occasions, there will be challenges ahead.

That is why my Government has adopted a bold agenda and clear plan to secure Tasmania's future.

To secure more opportunities for Tasmanians and to build a more diverse and resilient economy.

To harness our natural strengths and competitive advantages and realise our true potential.

This includes advanced manufacturing, agriculture, mineral resources, fisheries, forestry, tourism, arts and the iconic events which showcase our culture, heritage and ingenuity.

Tasmania has secured its reputation as a climate leader.

We were the first state in Australia to reach net zero emissions and we've reached our 2050 target early for five years in a row.

My Government will continue to harness our island's competitive advantages and lead Australia's transition to a low-emissions economy.

We will continue to take climate action across all sectors of our economy, including in housing, transport, waste, industry, energy and land use.

And we have a bold plan to unlock Tasmania's world-class renewable energy resources, including hydro generation and storage, as well as wind and solar resources.

Key projects, including Marinus Link, Battery of the Nation and our Hydrogen strategy will help transition Tasmania to a renewable energy future and meet our Renewable Energy Target of 200% by 2040.

We are focused on building better and more connected communities, and ensuring we have the inter-generational infrastructure our growing state needs.

We are building better roads, schools, hospitals, bridges, dams and irrigation networks right across our State, which is supporting thousands of jobs in our regions.

To realise our vision for Tasmania to provide opportunity for all who call this State their home, my Government is focused on delivering improved outcomes for more Tasmanians.

This includes a substantial investment, and whole of Government approach to building a better health system for Tasmania, delivering more housing to meet demand and ensuring Tasmania has the best training pathways so more Tasmanians have access to the skills and training they need for the jobs available.

While my Government is providing unprecedented resources for our health system - delivering record staffing levels, opening and funding new beds, and investing in the facilities our patients and staff deserve across our regions – we know there is more to do.

That is why there is a clear plan to ensure investments and reforms to Tasmania's health system will deliver a more integrated system, to deliver the care patients need in the right place and at the right time.

At the very heart of this, my Government is leaving no stone unturned to identify all options to provide better and faster access to care for Tasmanians.

The Premier and Minister for Health met with each major public and private hospital immediately after forming Government, to look at further improvements to healthcare and solutions to take pressure off our busy public hospital system.

We are drawing from learnings through COVID, where our private and public systems worked well together, and we are providing funding and support to

deliver care sooner for Tasmanians by working with our private hospitals to ensure they are better able to support our public hospitals to manage demand.

Right now work is underway to understand how private hospitals can assist our public hospital sector to meet our ambitious elective surgery schedule, identifying opportunities to purchase beds from private hospitals to improve patient flow and access to care, and enable private hospitals to support public hospitals with demand in other areas, including community nursing and home care.

Importantly, we have wasted no time in delivering on commitments, with a Memorandum of Understanding signed with Calvary Health Care to accelerate the delivery of their \$120 million co-located private hospital adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital, which will enable better health services and boost attraction and retention of health professionals, including specialists to the community.

Co-located private and public hospitals have been extremely successful and beneficial to communities across Australia, and we know they can help attract and help to retain difficult-to-recruit specialists to our healthcare system.

There is no doubt this will deliver additional and complementary services to support and reduce pressure on the Launceston General Hospital and provide better health outcomes for Tasmanians.

My Government has also allocated \$156.4 million over four years across the State, to deliver an additional 22,300 elective surgeries and endoscopies, and we will invest an additional \$56 million to continue our transformation of the mental health system, alcohol and drug services, and boost preventative health measures.

This includes funding for new initiatives like an Emergency Mental Health Co-Response Team, which will deliver better outcomes for Tasmanians, increase the capacity of emergency services, and reduce hospitalisations.

We will also focus on the prevention of mental ill-health with a whole-of-community approach for all Tasmanians, by increasing the capacity for advice and information, and build the capacity of communities so Tasmanians can better understand and engage with their mental health, and stay well, by targeting mental health literacy initiatives in collaboration with local government.

There is no doubt that if we work together, we can and will build a better health system.

Strong, connected, healthy and safe communities are so important.

This is why my Government has a strong focus on keeping Tasmanians safe, and investing in infrastructure to support our community— such as more social and affordable housing.

I am very pleased that my Government is undertaking record investment into social and affordable housing, and homelessness initiatives, as well as incentives and plans to help more Tasmanians realise the dream of owning their own home.

Not only is this delivering more housing options for more Tasmanians, it provides a clear pipeline of work to keep our construction and building sector engaged and busy well into the future, supporting thousands of jobs and many businesses – large and small - across Tasmania.

We are keeping our communities safe by boosting Tasmania Police to the highest number of officers in the State's history, investing in CCTV in our rural and regional areas, and providing more funds to Crimestoppers and support for specialist recruitment, in areas such as cybercrime.

My Government is focused on keeping communities safe from the threat of bushfire, with more fuel reduction burns, more volunteers and new-generation technologies.

Keeping our communities safe, means taking action against family violence, which remains a top priority for my Government.

Since the launch of our first, nation-leading action plan in 2015, my Government has continued to build upon its commitment, investment and scope to respond to family and sexual violence in Tasmania.

Our response takes a whole of Government, multi-agency approach, and provides significant investment to deliver 40 actions under the current Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022.

We have made good progress over the past six years, and in 2019-20 we saw the continued reduction in the number of family violence incidents assessed as high risk.

We are investing in crisis accommodation through the Affordable Housing Action Plan, and extending the capacity of women's shelters across the State including Jireh House, Salvation Army and Magnolia House.

Through my Government's Rapid Rehousing program, we are helping more households into transitional accommodation and also funding an additional 20 properties as part of our response to COVID-19.

However, there is more work to be done.

This is why my Government has committed to a third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan, with fully funded, evidence-based initiatives, in consultation with the Family and Sexual Violence Consultative Group and people with lived experience.

As part of this, we will commission a feasibility study for a new Safe Emergency Accommodation facility in the Northern Midlands, to better support women from rural areas.

Ensuring we are removing barriers to enable more women to participate in learning and in the workforce is key, and I am pleased my Government is boosting the Women's Workforce Participation initiative to include additional funding over the next three years to develop an industry-led approach, to enable and empower more women to participate across the economy.

This includes a Diversity Action Plan, in partnership with the Tasmanian Mineral and Energy Council, a Women in Building and Construction Strategy, and a Girls in Property pilot program.

My Government is also boosting health services for Women through Family Planning Tasmania and we are providing free sanitary items in Government schools to ensure girls don't miss out on learning because they don't have access to basic items.

There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and supporting the families in which they grow, are loved and belong.

We are committed to continuing the work that's begun, including our response to our most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

This is why we are developing Tasmania's very first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

We are also providing funds to support new, stable permanent family placements where children and young people can belong and thrive, and we will extend supports for Informal Kinship Carers, who play a crucial role in the lives of many Tasmanian children who are unable to live with their parents.

Ensuring we have a resilient and diverse economy to attract investment and enable our Tasmanian businesses to develop, grow and create employment opportunities for Tasmanians is critical.

A strong economy enables greater investment in the key areas that make a difference to Tasmanian lives – health, housing, community infrastructure, the environment, and training and education.

My Government has worked hard to deliver transformative change in education, including prioritising the extension of Years 11 and 12 across senior schools, to increase the opportunity for more Tasmanians to complete tertiary education.

Now, my Government will invest almost \$100 million in new funding into our TasTAFE system, including 100 more teachers, and new infrastructure and facilities, with increased access for rural and regional students.

These initiatives are described by industry as bold and pragmatic, and responding to the needs of Tasmanian businesses seeking to employ.

Ensuring young Tasmanians can get the training, apprenticeships and jobs for their future here in Tasmania is a key pillar of my Government's plan to Secure Tasmania's Future.

My Government has a clear plan to realise its vision, underpinned by principles of compassion and conviction.

This is why we believe very strongly that we must continue on our pathway to achieve reconciliation with our First Nations people, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal people, who have inhabited this Island for more than 40,000 years.

Acknowledgment under our constitution and Closing the Gap provide a solid foundation to build from.

And whilst my Government remains committed to stronger protection of Aboriginal heritage and open to proposals for further land return, there is more to be done.

In consultation with our First Nations people, my Government wants to find an agreed pathway to reconciliation so we can all share in the potential that exists from a truly meaningful, reconciled relationship.

Our goal is to see better outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, more opportunity for them and their families, to dignify the relationship with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and achieve a truly reconciled community.

During her recent term as Governor for Tasmania, Professor Kate Warner AC has demonstrated a strong commitment to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and she has agreed to facilitate a process to understand directly from Aboriginal people themselves how best to take our next steps towards reconciliation.

Professor Warner, who will be supported by Professor Tim McCormack, will deliver a report to the Premier by October, which will then be tabled in Parliament later this year.

The Premier has requested that Professor Warner provide in her report recommendations that will outline a proposed way forward towards reconciliation, as well as the views of Tasmanian Aboriginal people on a Truth Telling process and on what a pathway to Treaty would consist of.

Professor Warner will begin these discussions in the coming weeks.

While the last 16 months have been some of the most challenging this State has ever faced, my Government believes that Tasmanians - regardless of race, religion, circumstance or background - demonstrated a common humanity during this time that brought us closer together.

We must hold onto that, we must learn from that, because it makes all of us stronger as a result.

My Government has received the endorsement of the people of Tasmania who have voted for stability and certainty.

They will responsibly and fairly govern for all, and importantly work hard to ensure more Tasmanians are able to grasp the opportunities that now exist in this beautiful State.

They have been given the honour and privilege of governing Tasmania to implement a bold vision to create opportunity for all Tasmanians, and to implement their plan to secure our State's future.

They hold an important role, and with it comes great responsibility.

I know my Government will lead with conviction and compassion, and continue to place the wellbeing and welfare of the people of Tasmania first.

Thank you.