

**ROYAL HOBART SHOW 2021 OPENING ADDRESS**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA SHOWGROUND**  
**THURSDAY 21 OCTOBER 2021**

Good morning all and welcome to the 2021 Royal Hobart Show of the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

I am delighted to be here today and thank you to Peter Spotswood, President, Helen Geard, Vice President, and Scott Gadd, CEO, for this invitation. As Patron, I continue a very long tradition of Tasmanian Governors, and before them Van Diemen's Land Lieutenant-Governors, being closely associated with this Show.

I have very fond memories of coming to the Show on the train as a young child with my parents to enjoy seeing all the animals, sheep dog trials and wood chopping, then as a teenager with friends to enjoy the rides and showbags, and then with my own children. I never envisaged that the next stage of my attendance would be as Governor!

I think I can say without fear of disagreement that this year's Royal Hobart Show is the first masked Show since the first show in 1821. And unfortunately, the opening day – yesterday – had to be abandoned. Yet happily here we are.

Our Show has something for everyone:

*"Supreme Champion Bull; Sideshow Alley; Woodchopping; Animal Nursery; Sheep Dog Trials; Poultry, Pigeons & Canaries; Homecrafts; Royal Tasmanian Fine Food Awards; RAST Living Legends; Showbags ... Collectively these terms convey both the essence and variety of the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania and its ever-popular annual Royal Hobart Show."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foreword to Dianne Snowden *The Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania 1821-2021* Forty South Publishing 2021.

The fact that this is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hobart Show is remarkable. There can be very few largely volunteer-based organisations with such staying power. The story of those 200 years has no shortage of drama, many related to Tasmania's unpredictable weather, as well as economic hard times, and wars.

Also, since the first 1821 Show in front of today's Parliament Building, the location of the Show has had its difficulties. Among other venues the Show has been held in the Town Hall – in 1874 – and then at Elwick Racecourse for a couple of years following, but that was considered too far from town.

A decision was then made to use the Queen's Domain, but that idea was abandoned after a public outcry that it would demean the regal status of the Domain. Instead, James Lord offered the use of a paddock at his New Town property, Hobartville Estate – now The Friends' School.

A subsequent expansion saw the Show move to what is now New Town Cricket Oval. And then in 1903 it returned to Elwick.

Recalling the past of such a much-loved institution is valuable. Many of you may know that a book has recently been published to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Its title is *The Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania 1821-2021*, written by author-historian, Dr Dianne Snowden.

I was honoured to be invited to write the Foreword, in which I noted that in 1821, Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell became Patron of a society formed in Hobart Town to promote agricultural interests in the fledgling colony.

In the early 1920s, a Royal Charter was bestowed on the Society in recognition of its value to Tasmania over those first hundred years. In her history book, Dr Snowden writes: "From the time of the first Royal Show in 1923, the Show has gone from strength to strength ... Gate takings fluctuate but, in the main, the format of the Show has changed little ... Consistently, the Show's value has been seen in the contact it provides between country and town."

That is an important observation, with town dwellers gaining valuable insights into how our agricultural sector operates. This contact today extends to education, through the Society establishing formal associations with agricultural high schools in southern Tasmania.

Importantly, the ongoing redevelopment of the Showgrounds site expands the social responsibility demonstrated by the Society.

In my Foreword to Dr Snowden's book I write: "Congratulations to all of those individuals and groups – comprehensively listed in the book – whose dedication and foresight over time has meant that today the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania is justly able to describe itself as: 'Possibly the oldest cultural institution still operating in Australia ... now focused on celebrating 200 years and continuing to make the Royal Hobart Show and the Society contemporary, relevant and sustainable for the next 200 years.'"

The book is a thoroughly entertaining and informative read.

This 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show was to have been opened by the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley, and Mrs Linda Hurley. Sadly, and regrettably, due to Covid restrictions, they had to cancel their travel. May I tell you all that Their Excellencies are very disappointed indeed that they are unable to be here for the opening. They dearly would have loved to have been here. They have asked me to send their very best wishes both to the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania and also to you all attending this 200<sup>th</sup> Show.<sup>2</sup>

In closing, I congratulate everyone who is supporting this year's Royal Hobart Show. I congratulate Scott Gadd and all the RAST Committee for working their way through all the challenges, difficulties and uncertainties that have been part of the Society's operations since March last year.

May I remind us all: please follow the advice of our health authorities. This bicentennial Show is for our benefit, and the best way we can repay that is by enjoying ourselves safely.

It is now my great honour and delight to open this bicentennial Royal Hobart Show 2021.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Singer 19 October 2021 email to David Owen.