

**OPENING THE 2012 ROYAL HOBART SHOW
BY**

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GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

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It is once again a great pleasure for me and my wife to be here to open the Royal Hobart Show. This is an auspicious year, in that this is the 190th anniversary of the first Hobart Show making it the oldest Agricultural show in Australia and rather appropriately, it is the Year of the Farmer.

Now those of you who have not taken to liberally to our hosts' wine, will have correctly calculated that the first Hobart Show took place way back in 1822, ten years before the establishment of the Penal settlement at Port Arthur and a year before New South Wales' first show. The first Hobart Show was held in the old Market Place Hobart, on the site now occupied by Parliament House.

The organiser of that Show was the Agricultural Society of Van Dieman's Land and by taking the initiative to hold such an event they stole a march on all the other colonies, particularly New South Wales. Now this achievement may not seem all that significant until you realise just how competitive the separate colonies were in competing for resources and opportunities.

In July 1823 an article appeared in the Sydney Gazette reporting a speech made by the President of the Agricultural Society of New South

Wales, in which he extolled the virtues of the new land that had recently become available beyond the Blue Mountains.

His speech was ostensibly directed towards the importance of attracting new settlers to NSW, but as the following excerpts from his speech reveal his objective seemed more about destroying the reputation of Van Dieman's Land;

"We shall doubtless see many more free settlers . . . when the advantages which New South Wales possesses over Van Dieman's Land come to be universally and more correctly known."

"We can have no ill to that dependency . . . but it is important that emigrants, from so vast a distance as Great Britain should not be ruined by disappointment."

"Van Dieman's Land has gotten the name at home and it always takes many years to put down false pretensions and make known true ones."

So what's new some of you may think as you recall the present day argument between the States about changes to the GST revenue sharing arrangements.

However, you will be very pleased to hear that your first President, Edward Lord responded at length to this attack from New South Wales, but by using logic and reasoned argument in the place of the defamatory and resentful language used by his counterpart.

No doubt that spirit and determination has pervaded the Royal Hobart Shows that have been held over the years and helped the Royal

Agricultural Society of Tasmania to achieve this fantastic 190th anniversary and the title of the oldest agriculture Show in the country.

Mr Lord's response is far too long to quote here but his reply is at its most telling when he cites Captain Dixon of the good ship Skelton who apparently wrote a reference guide on the colonies to help those in England who were contemplating emigration;

He wrote, "Captain Dixon had much opportunity to see both colonies and his report is marked by intelligence and impartiality. [a modest fellow] He expresses himself neatly in these words; *If a man can live at home, let him do so. If not these are the best colonies for emigration and of these two I prefer Van Dieman's Land.* These were the words of an intelligent observer only two years ago, who could have no bias, whose object was only to give his countrymen correct information."

So honour was restored.

A hundred years later the Hobart Show celebrated its centenary and was accorded the honour of receiving the Royal Charter from King George V.ⁱ

The Mercury described the 1922 Show in glowing terms, mentioning improving crowd numbers and the high quality of the beef and dairy cattle entries. The quality of the light harness horses were also complimented and very favourably compared with previous years where in the view of the reporter they were "unworthy of the show arena." Interestingly he credited the rise in quality to the trotting clubs which he feared that given the chance "many people would stamp out of existence."

The newspaper reported however that the apples were a “grievous disappointment” and even allowing for the fact that they were out of season the writer’s sentiment was they were “unworthy of exhibit.” Conversely the children’s export apple packing competition received high commendation.

Well, you might think that there was something refreshing and honest about the media coverage of 1922 and perhaps something that you would not see repeated today. In the same short eight page newspaper in which there is an article bemoaning the poor quality of the apples at the Hobart Show there was also a public notice placed by a Mr Joseph Cronly of the *Delectable Fruit and Confectionary Shop* informing Hobartians that he had just purchased all the apples on display at the show and they were now available at his shop in Collins St.

You can’t help but wonder what on earth Mr Cronley did with all those apples described as “a grievous disappointment.”ⁱⁱ

It is also interesting to note how just much Hobart and its society have changed in the intervening ninety years. The 1922 Mercury was filled with opportunistic advertisements from local businesses offering great show week bargains for country shoppers. Many of those businesses were once household names, but have since faded into history. A small sample of those offerings that some of us may still remember - or do remember but pretend not to - included Brownell’s London House offering Summer frocks and Stetson hats for young men, Mathers offering stationery and toiletries, Canes Hardware store selling

discounted sporting goods as well as offerings from Charles Davis and Fitzgerald's.

But I have to say that it is a real testament to the Hobart Show that whilst these businesses were unable to survive the test of time and vagaries of economic ebbs and flows, the Royal Hobart Show continues to deliver a tradition first begun back in 1822.

With the current global financial crisis still dominating the world economy this is a testing time for Agricultural shows. A recent national study into the economic and social impact of Australian agricultural shows found that the show movement could be in decline despite the significant economic and social impact that agricultural shows create. It appears that there are fewer shows operating and fewer people attending shows than was the case 12 years ago. According to the study this is so, notwithstanding the fact that the research also shows that generally speaking, agricultural shows improve people's quality of life and build social capital within local communities and regions in Australia.

Not surprisingly the report recognised the enormous importance of volunteers without whom the report concluded "the show movement will definitely cease to exist."ⁱⁱⁱ

So there are obviously some more challenges ahead but I'm sure that is nothing new for you and I'm confident that with your President Wesley Hazel, his Committee and your CEO Scott Gadd that you will adapt and will still be here in 2022 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the first Hobart Show.

So congratulations to you and also congratulations to the thousands of staff, volunteers, entertainers, exhibitors, contractors, service clubs and sponsors involved with the Royal Hobart Show who make it what it is, and welcome to the tens of thousands of visitors who make their efforts so worthwhile. So I have much pleasure in declaring the 2012 Royal Hobart Show open

Thank you

ⁱ <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/123228?zoomLevel=3> accessed 9th October 2012.

ⁱⁱ [http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/23642296?searchTerm=1922 hobart show&searchLimits](http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/23642296?searchTerm=1922+hobart+show&searchLimits) Accessed 8th October 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.gcas.net.au/images/IMPACT%20STUDY/FINAL%20Impact%20Study%20Report%20190612.pdf> Accessed 8th October 2012.