

**ROYAL HOBART SHOW 2016 LUNCHEON OPENING ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA SHOWGROUND
THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2016**

Good afternoon. It is good to be here again at this traditional luncheon. For those of you who might be wondering where my husband Dick is, he's attending as a godfather of the bride at a wedding in the south of France. Given that I had accepted your invitation to open the show before the wedding invitation arrived, I had to of course decline the latter!

I am honoured to be the Patron of the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania, not least because it keeps up a very old tradition. Some of you will know that the original Van Diemen's Land Agricultural Society was formed in Hobart Town in 1821, by permission of Lieutenant-Governor Sorell, and the first show was subsequently conducted where the lawns of Parliament House are today.

And this year's Show marks the 194th anniversary of that first ever agricultural show. It's a remarkable achievement. Among other sites over that time it has been held in the Town Hall – in 1874 – at then at Elwick Racecourse in a couple of years following, but that was deemed to be 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 of 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.

So that's a fair bit of movement, but the one constant with agricultural shows, yesterday and today, is their popularity.

Throughout their history, agricultural shows have offered exhibitors and visitors an entertaining combination of serious competition and light-hearted amusements. In contrast with English agricultural shows, Australian agricultural shows have for a long time been a combination of the agricultural (showcasing livestock and produce, displaying farm machinery) and fun fair – sideshow alley,

merry go-rounds and rides. And of course showbags. I was interested to read the history of showbags – they started off as sample bags and were free, their purpose being to advertise their products. The bounty included everything from breakfast foods to sauces, canned meats, miniature cans of fruit, cake mixes, nuts, puddings, sugar, flour, preserved and dried fruits, biscuits, tiny jars of peanut paste, jams and much more. By the 1950s, when I first visited the Show (by train in those days, which was part of the fun), they were no longer free, but I still remember that there were Weetbix bags and Vegemite bags in those days.

The Grand Parade has long been a highlight of agricultural shows and I am glad to see that this tradition continues at the Royal Hobart Show. Grand Parades originated, I understand, at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. In its heyday the Grand Parade on Easter Saturday had hundreds of animals paraded in a series of concentric circles. This spectacular sight, which involved creatures ranging from newborn lambs and Shetland ponies to Brahman bulls and Clydesdale stallions, almost invariably was conducted without a hitch – except on one occasion when a steer escaped and plunged into the quarters of the Royal Agricultural Society.

Show Grand Parades are still called *Grand* Parades, no matter how modest, and even Flinders Island, with a population of a 705, has a Grand Parade!

In concluding and by way of contrast I would like to touch upon a serious development and one that we hope that could work very well for the Tasmanian agricultural sector and rural communities more broadly.

The State Government has an aspirational plan to lift the total farm gate value of Tasmanian agriculture from an estimated \$1.35 billion in 2014/15 to \$10 billion by 2050. Dick, with his background in agriculture has taken a special interest in the strategies needed to achieve this goal and he and I are of the view that attracting more young people to study agriculture is one such strategy.

This interest in agricultural education was stimulated by the realisation that so few students in 2014 were enrolled in the first year of the various agricultural degrees. And yet in Tasmania, agricultural industries were and are short of qualified people. Many young people seem to be under the misapprehension that farming is just about gumboots, moleskins and driving a tractor. So Dick has been working on bringing industry, the University and other agricultural trade training bodies together to ensure that there are courses to meet the needs of

the industry and that those courses are being promoted. He has held two forums on agricultural education at government house to this end.

And recently he has taken on the role as Chair of the Agriskills Reference Panel which forms part of the State's Agrigrowth Plan. The Panel has the responsibility to assist in setting the training and skills priorities in Tasmania to ensure there is a job-ready workforce to meet the future demands of agricultural industries.

Already there are interesting developments, one of which is the very recently announced two-year Associate Degree in Agribusiness. It will be available online with the addition of face-to-face tutorials, workshops and laboratory sessions. The Associate Degree will be more 'hand's on' than traditional university degrees and will involve work integrated learning components embedded in every discipline subject. There are also developments at the high school level with new agricultural subjects planned for 2017 for Years 11 and 12.

All of this I think, suggests there is a bright future for agriculture and for this show. With 5000 entries this year and some impressive entertainment it promises to be a wonderful event. On that optimistic note I would like to declare the 2016 Royal Hobart Agricultural Show open.

Thank you.