

OPENING OF THE 50th SCOUT GUIDE REGATTA 2013
BY
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GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
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As the Governor and the Chief Scout of Tasmania is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this Regatta. This year has been a big one for Scouts and Guides in Tasmania. It began in January this year with the huge and very successful Guides' Jamboree "fanTAStic" at Quercus Park. Sadly, this year also saw the destruction of Guide records in the fire in Bathurst Street, but now we are about to embark on - not just another Scout Guide Regatta - but on the *Golden* Scout Guide Regatta, for this one is the big one - the 50th Anniversary of the first Scout Guide Regatta ever to be held in this State.

The annual Regatta is unique in Australia, for both the Scouts and the Guides, and its popularity has seen a steady growth in support so that today it has become the largest ongoing event of its kind in Australia, with over 1,000 youth members in attendance and in excess of 500 adults to see that it all goes according to plan. To all those wonderful adult volunteers, I say thank you, for without your dedication and hard work over the years, the Regatta would have foundered long ago.

This Regatta owes its origins to the energy and talents of Ken Dickinson, who founded the 18th Launceston Scouts in 1962, and

Keith Wells of the 1st Derwent Sea Scouts, a troop of which I was once a member – and, may I boast – one-time champion of the rather dangerous game, “British Bull Dog.” They set up a Regatta on the River Derwent for the weekend of 6th and 7th March 1964, which was attended by four troops of Sea Scouts from the south and two from the north. Although the Guides were not part of that first Regatta, three Sea Ranger troops from the south of the State and one from the north were very much part of that first event. The whole weekend was a great success; a success that has been repeated for each of the following 49 years. 165 competitors took part in that first Regatta in sailing, rowing and swimming races. According to the Mercury newspaper¹, the programme also included a pillow fight on the greasy pole. I commend to you a book written by Lyn Muir on the history of this unique event², for it truly captures the spirit of the Scout/Guide Regattas, and it is clear to see why they have become so popular.

The second Regatta in 1965 saw participation by non-Sea Scouts for the first time, according to Lyn Muir, because the parents of the 1st Prince of Wales troop offered to help organise the Regatta, so the Scouts were invited to join in the fun.³ It just got bigger and better the next year when the Regatta was held on the River Tamar and competitors came from Hobart, Smithton and St Helens. By 1969, parents had become a permanent workforce, helping to make the

¹ 1932

² “Tasmanian Scout Guide Regatta; The first 50 years; Foreword

³ Supra

Regattas a success - a workforce that is very much still in evidence. The 1967 Tasmanian Bushfires saw the Regatta move to St Helens. It's not clear to me when Guides first competed in the Regatta, but they were certainly there for the fifth Regatta held on the River Derwent and have been very active in the events ever since.

The Scout Guide Regatta is a success story. The Chief Guide Commissioner for Australia, Helen Geard, says that this is "because it provides young people with the opportunity to have fun around water, be challenged in a safe environment, learn new skills and make new friends."

According to the Chief Commissioner for Scouts here in Tasmania, Mike Patten, who reflects on the excitement of attending his first Regatta when he was 12 years old, "the unique format that has evolved through the hard work of so many Leaders and supporters means that this excitement is just as true for the newest scout or guide as it is for every other section of the two movements."

To all those who, over the past 50 years, have done so much to contribute to the strength and continuity of this unique event and, in doing so, have done so much to contribute to the character, independence, initiative and resolve of our youth - the country's greatest asset - I say thank you, well done and please keep it up.

I declare this 50th Scout Guide Regatta open and wish it every success.