

**“SPIRIT OF THE WILD” NAMING
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
PRINCES WHARF NO. 1, HOBART, MONDAY 14 MAY 2018**

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me as RACT Patron to officiate at this naming ceremony for the new Gordon River Cruises vessel, “Spirit of the Wild”.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land—the Mouheneener people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

May I acknowledge among you:

- Kathryn Westwood, Board President;
- Harvey Lennon, Chief Executive;
- Toby Richardson, co-director Richardson Devine Marine.

In this the fourth year in which Gordon River Cruises has been owned and operated by the RACT, the delivery of “Spirit of the Wild” is a most significant achievement.

The vessel will join and then replace “Lady Jane Franklin II”, and the small-group “MV Sophia”, in ensuring that Gordon River Cruises is able to continue to offer a pre-eminent Australian eco-tour experience.

In this context it is important to record also that the Strahan waterfront is benefiting from upgrades in excess of 6.5 million dollars, through the five-year Community Asset Program funded by funded by TasPorts and the State Government.

The West Coast Council has also expended considerable monies on street-scaping of the Strahan Wharf and cruise precinct.

And TasPorts has worked very effectively with cruise terminal tenants World Heritage Cruises and RACT Destinations to effect the necessary cruise terminal redevelopment associated with the ultra-sophisticated of “Spirit of the Wild”.

All of this will benefit Tasmanian tourism. And most importantly, it will benefit Strahan directly – in business, and flowing through that into the social and cultural wellbeing of that community and others in Tasmania’s geographically most distant region.

I therefore congratulate RACT and all others associated with this project. It is a really important development in an area where inevitable economic downturns and tourism uncertainty have to be factored into almost all decision-making.

This of course has always been part of the story of our very own “Wild West” – and so I’d like to take a moment to reflect upon that, as a reminder of the reality that “Spirit of the Wild”, once she ties up at the Gordon River Cruises Terminal in Strahan, is set to ply her trade in a remote and rugged place of great natural beauty, that even today can be somewhat difficult of access.

In February 1882 Major Sir George Strahan, Tasmania’s 6th Governor – I am the 28th – signed a proclamation endorsing the renaming of the Macquarie Harbour settlement of Smith Cove as Strahan.ⁱ

However, prospectors making their way to the King River and Linda Valley Goldfield preferred disembarking further north at Long Bay, because that bay had a deepwater frontage, plenty of fresh water and was less exposed to rough weather.

So it was that the Smith Cove settlement subsequently became known as Old Strahan, and Long Bay assumed the name Strahan. The “new” Strahan developed rapidly, so that by the early 1890s there was this description, and I quote:

“Within the sheltered confines of [the bay], ‘numerous small steamers were buzzing in and out of the harbour like flies round a honey pot, often berthed 2 and 3 abreast of the wharf.’”ⁱⁱ

Strahan also soon “acquired the reputation as the seaside sport and recreation town”ⁱⁱⁱ – there were discounted railway fares from Zeehan, four large hotels, and boat hire for fishing. Scenic walks developed, as did boat trips to the old penal settlement at Sarah Island and up the Gordon River.

Our researches indicate that one of the first Gordon River cruises may have been on Easter Sunday in 1892, when the “S. S. Banks Peninsula” ran an excursion departing Strahan at 8.30 am and returning to the wharf “In time to permit passengers to catch the 6.30 pm train for Zeehan.”^{iv} That cruise cost five shillings.

Fast forward to the 21st Century and we know for certain that in the 12 months ending September 2017, Tasmania welcomed 1.28 million visitors, an increase of eight per cent compared to the previous 12-months.^v

That augurs well for the future of Strahan tourism – and again is testament to some sound tactical decision-making in commissioning “Spirit of the Wild”.

Which brings me to this magnificent vessel. Constructed by RDM [*common usage for Richardson Devine Marine*] at their Goodwood facility, she is probably the first commercial passenger vessel of its kind in the world to be fitted with a hybrid drive system of diesel engines and electric motors.

This German design – by MTU, a division of Rolls Royce –enables the main diesel engines to be shut down once in the Gordon River, and the vessel propelled with two electric motors driving the propellers, in what is called “Quiet Running”.^{vi}

There is a threefold effect from this: near-silence to enjoy the spectacular river, which itself is renowned for its own silence as much as its visual splendour; reduction of fuel consumption; and further minimisation of environmental impact through reduced wash against the river’s banks.

Here are some further “Spirit of the Wild” specifications and attributes:

> New South Wales-based marine design consultancy Spear Green Design undertook the Vessel Concept and Exterior Design, and the Marine Interior Design including 2D and 3D Modelling and Animations;^{vii}

> the Naval Architect is Incat Crowther;

> there is a 180° rear-facing deck and a 360° upper-viewing deck;

> reflective floor-to-ceiling windows;

> Hydrowood timber fitouts;

> solar powered on-board electrics.

And so we have reached this day of the naming ceremony. I feel most privileged to have been asked to do the honours, in naming her. In my time as Governor I have done some things I would not have thought remotely likely as a legal academic – wearing camouflage fatigues and firing a Steyer rifle is one – and I have to say that crashing a good bottle of sparkling against a boat’s hull is another!

I have cruised the Gordon River a number of times, most recently last year from St Johns Falls after a wonderful eights days rafting on the Franklin River. And so I well

understand the importance of soundlessly cruising these wild rivers in a vessel that does the least amount of damage to the precious ecosystem of the river. This is all the more reason why I am so honoured to be officiating here today.

I now name this vessel *The Spirit of the Wild*.

Thank you.

ⁱ *Hobart Gazette*, 17 January 1882, pp. 203-4, quoted in Rae p. 70.

ⁱⁱ Ware, J, *Strahan, Macquarie Harbour*, 1908 (facsim ed 1981, p. 18), quoted in Rae, Lou, *The Lost Province: Exploration, Isolation, Innovation and Domination in the Mount Lyell Region 1859-1935*, p. 144 (UTAS D Phil thesis 2005)

ⁱⁱⁱ Rae p. 75.

^{iv} *Zeehan & Dundas Herald*, 16 April 1892, page 3.

^v <https://www.easternshoresun.com.au/?p=1954>, accessed 5 May 2018.

^{vi} <https://www.rdm.com.au/vessel/rdm072-spirit-of-the-wild/>, accessed 6 May 2018.

^{vii} <http://speargreen.com.au/portfolio/gordon-river-cruises-34-m-luxury-passenger-ferry/>, accessed 6 May 2018.