

**ST MARY'S COLLEGE**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**BALL ROOM, THURSDAY 10 MAY 2018**

Good evening and welcome to this Government House reception to mark and celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of St Mary's College.

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:

- The Honourable Elise Archer MP, Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Corrections, Environment and the Arts;
- Alderman Ron Christie, Lord Mayor of Hobart;
- Helen Spencer, St Mary's College Principal.

When Principal Helen Spencer wrote to Government House one year ago requesting this reception, she referred in her letter to 2018 being “an incredibly significant year for St Mary's and Catholic education in Tasmania”.

How true those words were and are – not only in the specific context of your School but in the broader educational and social historical development of Tasmania. Indeed, at the time of the establishment of St Mary's College in 1868, the fledgling self-governing colony of Tasmania had at best a fractured educational system.

This Government House reception is therefore both a joyous and formal celebration of your Sesquicentennial, acknowledging the significance of Catholic education in this island.

Your year began with the Blessing of the 150th badges, in February, the badges blessed by His Grace Archbishop Emeritus Adrian Doyle and distributed to over one thousand students and staff members to wear proudly through the year.<sup>i</sup>

There is your 150<sup>th</sup> Art Competition. And your forthcoming “150 Faces” book.

And of course this Saturday is the big day and evening, commencing with the College Historical Walking Tours in the afternoon; the Anniversary Mass at St Mary’s Cathedral Saturday at half-past 3; and your sold-out 150th Anniversary Gala Dinner, to be held in the marvellous Federation Ballroom of the Hotel Grand Chancellor.

Then on Sunday there will be your Grand Bazaar at the College, Sunday, created and hosted by the Parents and Friends Association.

On this latter subject, I was interested to read in your history book celebrating 125 years, compiled and edited by Cecily Verrier<sup>ii</sup>, the fact that a Grand Bazaar was held in January 1868, in order to raise funds urgently for completing and furnishing the Harrington Street convent.

That Bazaar, held under the patronage of Tasmania’s second Governor, Sir Thomas and Mrs Gore Browne, was a great success, partly because of the Vice-Regal prestige attached to it. Yet as the book points out, Gore Browne was criticised – he had apparently, according to one prominent newspaper, quote, “given offence” to “Protestant fellow-colonists”!<sup>iii</sup>

Well done Sir Thomas, I say, as Tasmania’s 28<sup>th</sup> Governor. The fact is that the Gore Browne’s were well aware of the lack of both formal and spiritual education for disadvantaged families in the young colony. And so he did what was right and necessary, in backing Archbishop Daniel Murphy’s decision to found a Catholic education facility in Hobart, as a “Presentation School” based on the Order founded by Nano Nagle.<sup>iv</sup>

Vice Regal support for the school continued. In 1906, at a Garden Fete, the Governor’s wife, Lady Edeline Strickland, formally opened SMC’s new tennis court. Moreover, she entrusted her two daughters, including seven-year-old Mabel, to the care of the presentation sisters, during her absence on leave in Europe for ‘many months’.<sup>v</sup>

In the history book's Epilogue, Cecily Verrier writes: "Only those who have been privileged to be part of the great traditions of this college could understand the bond that exists between all who have passed through the portals since 1868. Undoubtedly the key to this lies with the spirit and work of the Presentation Sisters."<sup>vi</sup>

That remains true today, for your 950-plus students from Year K to 12, in forging and developing individual spiritual development and the collective Catholic identity that is the founding principle of St Mary's College.

Most noteworthy too is the College's continuing focus on the importance of working for social justice in society.<sup>vii</sup> The wheel has therefore come full circle. In 1868 there was an urgent need to create a school to generate education among the deprived and disadvantaged. And now this great College is reaching out to help those Tasmanians in need.

That alone is cause for celebration. And for continuing reflection on the "Presentation touchstones of hospitality, compassion and simplicity".<sup>viii</sup>

So – congratulations to all of you in this your 150<sup>th</sup> year, and now please do enjoy the reception.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.smc.tas.edu.au/150th-anniversary/>, accessed 5 May 2018.

<sup>ii</sup> *St Mary's College [:] founded 1868 [:] Celebrating 125 Years*, compiled and edited by Cecily Verrier, Hobart, St Mary's College Old Scholars Association, 1993.

<sup>iii</sup> The Tasmanian Times (Hobart Town), Thursday 13 February 1868, page 2.

<sup>iv</sup> *St Mary's College*, pp. 1 and 2.

<sup>v</sup> *St Mary's College*, pp 24, 37.

<sup>vi</sup> *St Mary's College*, p. 243.

<sup>vii</sup> Annual School Community Report 2017 p. 3 "Community Participation and Christian Outreach".

<sup>viii</sup> Report p. 7 "Community Involvement".