

TASMANIAN GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MONDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2018

Good evening and welcome to this Government House reception to mark the 50th anniversary of the Tasmanian Geography Teachers Association.

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:

- Interstate guests including Trish Douglas, Chair, Australian Geography Teachers Association;
- Dr Grant Kleeman AGTA Director and Immediate Past Chair;
- Lorraine Chaffer, President, Geography Teachers Association of New South Wales;
- Bob Solomon, instrumental in the founding of the TGTA;
- Liz Parkes, and Lorraine Jones, founding members of the TGTA;
- And TGTA Committee members present – Rowan Harris, President, Greg Calvert, Secretary, and Debbie Claridge, Karen Caporelli, Caryn Shield, Bianca Coleman.

It is a great pleasure to be hosting this even which celebrates 50 years of a society that encourages the professional development of geography teachers and fosters the learning of such an important subject in our schools. I must confess to a rather slim understanding of the breadth of geography as a discipline. Is Geography a science or an arts subject?

My confusion over this is because in my student days it was definitely seen as an arts subject whereas today at the University of Tasmania, Geography and Environment is firmly in the College of Science and Engineering. I guess the answer is that Geography is both. Physical geography is the study of weather and oceans and the natural environment and human geography is the study of people, culture and transportation and it brings together skills from the natural and social sciences.

To understand the extent to which it is an interdisciplinary subject drawing on the arts and the sciences, one needs just a fleeting familiarity with the work of some of the public intellectuals here in Tasmania whose core discipline is Geography – Pete Hays and Jamie Kirkpatrick are examples – to appreciate the contribution Geography makes to critical thinking.

The other perception I had about geographers is that they always wear shorts (winter and summer), blundstone boots and a beanie, a perception contributed to by my son in law, a geographer, whose PhD supervisor, Dr Les Wood is here this evening.

So, well aware that geography is much more than about maps and capital cities, as your patron Tim Costello has emphasised, I am going to tell you a little bit about one of my distant predecessors, Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Franklin, who was a famous polar explorer before he became Governor and who later perished searching for the North-West Passage.

I should also mention his extraordinary wife, Lady Jane Franklin, who resisted the passive role of Governor's lady in a convict colony but energetically involved herself in the business of improving the colony, was the first woman to climb Mt Wellington and to travel overland from Hobart to Macquarie Harbour.

When her husband went missing, she studied the Arctic from afar, became an armchair expert in its geography and the first woman to be awarded the Royal Geographical Society's Founder's Medal.ⁱ

Sir John's international political influence and scientific expertise meant that he was able to orchestrate the establishment of a cutting-edge observatory in Van Diemen's Land, recording terrestrial magnetism.

The Franklin observatory buildings – with their sensitive instruments – were constructed in 1840, a few hundred metres from where we stand, because of

the deep sandstone base here minimising magnetic interference with those instruments.

In charge of the observatory was a Royal Navy Lieutenant, Joseph Henry Kay, the brother of the architect of this building, William Porden Kay – although that's another story.

Joseph Kay and Sir John Franklin worked closely together in the Rossbank magnetic observatory, Kay taking hourly recordings over a period of years.

For your purposes, as geographers, I'd like to quote Joseph Kay, not in reference to his observatory directly but a matter arising out of it, which is that he corrected a series of egregious errors in the 1839 map of Van Diemen's Land drawn up by the colony's Surveyor-General, the somewhat controversial but professionally respected George Frankland. His 1839 map was the first full charting of Van Diemen's Land, and so it was very important.

But Joseph Kay wrote, in an 1848 issue of the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture, Statistics*, and I quoteⁱⁱ:

"It is unquestionable that Frankland's map is full of errors in the astronomical positions of the principal headlands; and the recent survey of [Darwin's] H.M.S. Beagle, on the north coast, from which I will take a few examples, confirms the statement. It is surely a reproach that, after forty years of colonisation, the latitude (to say nothing of the longitude) of the most important points in the island should be in error, in some cases more than six miles. I will first quote one example, viz., the South West Cape, a headland for which all ships must steer who propose to visit the Derwent, when coming from the southward or westward."

Kay went on to quote the measurements of Furneaux in March 1773; Cook in January 1777; Flinders in December 1798; and Stokes (the Beagle survey) in February 1842; finding that,

"There is very little difference in the readings, which have a mean average of 42° 33', [whereas] "Frankland's map places [the Cape] 43° 41', eight miles further south!

“Had the error been the other way it is impossible to foresee what might have been the consequence to ships running in, in thick blowing weather, with night coming on, and anxious to get hold of the land before dark; or, trusting to their reckoning and the accuracy of the chart, running boldly for the cape at night, without having previously made the land. [And] the north coast is quite as faultily laid down ...”

End of quote.

No doubt, as geographers – as it is with those of us in the law– precedent is a vital part of your profession. And so, faults and all, we continue to owe thanks to those who went before.

On which note, congratulations on your historic fiftieth year, and all the best in your hosting of the National Board meeting of the AGTA next month.

Now do enjoy the reception and feel free to take a look at our lovely State Rooms on this level.

Thank you.

ⁱ <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/jane-franklin-remarkable-woman> accessed 18 September 2018.

ⁱⁱ Launceston Examiner, Saturday 19 August 1848, page 2