

**UNITED NATIONS YOUTH AUSTRALIA 2018 EVATT NATIONAL FINALS**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2018**

Good morning and welcome to the Opening Ceremony of United Nations Youth Australia's Evatt National Finals 2018.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land. 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:

- Cassy O'Connor MP, Leader of the Tasmanian Greens;
- Alison Overeem, Leprena Centre Manager and local Palawa community member;
- Professor Natalie Brown, Director, Peter Underwood Centre;
- Jess Herne, President UN Youth Australia;
- Johanna Ellis, Convenor, Evatt National Finals and her Organising Committee colleagues.

And of course a very big welcome to members of the 30 teams gathered here for the Finals from across Australia and New Zealand. I would like to congratulate you all, not only for participating in this event but also for your selection in the finals.

I expect that very few of you will have been to this Government House before and for that reason alone Dick and I are really pleased to be able to host this important Opening Ceremony.

This is not least because of the central role of the Office of the Governor in the legal and constitutional arrangements of each of our States. Likewise at the Commonwealth level through the Office of the Governor-General in Australia; and the Office of the Governor-General of New Zealand.

It is here that each of Tasmania's Bills, having passed through both Houses of Parliament, are signed by me as Acts of Parliament. And while the signing may seem to be symbolic, the reality is that it is the final point of a legal framework in which policies have been debated – often at great length and in great detail – and is therefore the de facto signing off on an agreement reached by tried and trusted democratic means.

Your forthcoming debates, as representatives of the member states of the UN Security Council, will have the same sense of significance and importance. Furthermore, in your case the debates have global ramifications.

Having had a look at the comprehensive “Evatt Competition Regulations”, I am impressed by the range of important skills that are assessed: speaking; negotiation; teamwork; research; and diplomacy. Each of these are important skills to cultivate and at the heart of them is communication. In addition, the competition engages you in issues of global importance, stimulating interest in current affairs at an international level.

Collectively they will stand you in good stead well beyond this forthcoming week, in assisting you to mature into well-rounded, thoughtful, analytical young adults keen to make the world a better place.

The Evatt Competition is appropriately named. It was, of course, named after the notable Herbert ‘Doc’ Evatt, federal politician and judge of the High Court. Doc Evatt was the leader of the Australian delegation that founded the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945.<sup>1</sup> At the conference he spoke to the Great Powers on behalf of other nations of the world with a voice that commanded universal respect.

After three months of diplomatic struggle, the Charter of United Nations was adopted. It was a charter that had become more humane and larger in scope than envisaged by the Great Powers because it included provisions for the poor the weak and the oppressed. Dr Evatt's role in all of this was regarded as pivotal – and he was voted as one of the two most outstanding delegates, bringing great credit to Australia.

In 1948 Dr Evatt was elected as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the only Australian ever to have held the position. He presided over the adoption and proclamation of the Declaration of Human Rights. This is 70 years ago this month. It is said that his determination and force of personality ensured that it was passed without a single negative vote. He later observed that, “It was the first occasion on which the organized community of nations had made a declaration of human rights and freedoms .. millions of people, men women and children all over the world would turn to it for help, guidance and inspiration.”

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<sup>1</sup> The information is taken directly from ‘Doc Evatt: A brilliant & controversial character, <https://evatt.org.au/about-us/doc-evatt.html> accessed 3 December 2018.

The Evatt Competition could perhaps also have been named after Doc Evatt's niece, Elizabeth Evatt, who also had a wonderful career, also as a judge (the first Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia) and on the international stage – the first Australian to be elected to the UN Human Rights Commission. As a young academic I was enormously impressed by her work as one of the three commissioners on the Royal Commission on Human Relationships. The Commission's controversial report brought the then taboo topics of rape, family violence, child sexual abuse, abortion and homosexuality out into the open for the first time and recommended wide-ranging reforms.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate each of you for having made the voluntary decision in the first place, at school, to enter the Evatt Competition. For many students, the school curriculum is quite enough to be going on with – and that's fine. But your decision to take on this extra commitment is commendable.

It is also commendable because you are learning at a young age the rewards to be had from engaging in what are quite complex, real-life issues, and doing so in the unforgiving spotlight of the public gaze.

All the very best, then, in the debates ahead, and well done again for participating in this most beneficial annual competition.

Thank you.