

## **Reception to mark International Volunteers Day and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of Volunteering Tasmania.**

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all here this evening to a reception to celebrate two things. First of all, as you all know, today - 5<sup>th</sup> December - is International Volunteers Day as established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985. It is a day for volunteer organisations and individual volunteers to raise the public awareness of their contributions to economic and social development at local, national and international levels. Secondly, it is a day to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Volunteering Tasmania, an organisation with a mission to create an environment which provides and sustains effective volunteerism.

Volunteering Tasmania has gathered some impressive data together. For example, 155,000 Tasmanians are volunteers. This means that 41% of Tasmanian adults aged 18 and over are engaged in formal volunteering, that is volunteering through an organisation or group. In addition there is evidence to indicate that there is a considerable body of people who are engaged in informal volunteering. Interestingly, according to Volunteering Australia's National Survey of Volunteering in 2011, the principal reasons for volunteering in this country are twofold; because it makes a difference to other people and the community and because it gives the volunteers a satisfying sense of purpose. One thing that is clear and that is without the input of volunteers this country would not function.

As Adrienne Picone will testify without faithful volunteers, most non-profit and charitable organizations would not be able to provide the level of service and/or reach the people who are in need. That is pretty obvious I suppose, but did you also think about other organisations upon whom we all rely? Did you know that apart from just four career brigades, all fire brigades in Tasmania are made up of very skilled and dedicated volunteers drawn from

the local community? In other words Tasmania's fire brigades are made up of approximately 5,000 volunteers who operate from 232 stations in the suburban areas, larger towns and rural areas across the State.<sup>1</sup> Did you know if it wasn't for our current 6000 volunteers, ambulance services in Tasmania would be drastically reduced, particularly in rural areas?<sup>2</sup> What about the State Emergency Service? There are 550 volunteer members of the SES operating in 35 volunteer units.<sup>3</sup>

That's before you start thinking about the more obvious fields for volunteers; sporting groups, Cancer Council, Diabetes Tasmania, church organisations, youth bodies like scouts and guides and so on. The list is endless and it makes you proud to be a member of such a generous community.

In many different ways Volunteering Tasmania supports and encourages volunteers and voluntary organisations. The last annual report makes interesting reading in this area with things like volunteer information sessions, workshops on how to be a more effective volunteer, the volunteer connect programme that connects volunteers with organisations and the new Social Enterprise Unit.

So on this International Volunteer Day and 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Day there is a lot to celebrate. To everyone at Volunteer Tasmania I say well done and keep up the important work that you are doing and to all the thousands of Tasmanian Volunteers I say thank you, keep it up for it is essential work that you do for your community.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/Show?pageId=colVolunteer> accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ambovolunteer-recruit.org.au/> accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ses.tas.gov.au/h/es/media/facts> accessed 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013

And now we have something special for you to set the celebratory mood.

I would like to introduce you all to Sonya Piggot

Sonya Pigot is a year 10 student at St. Michael's Collegiate School. She started playing piano when she was four and since 2009 has been studying piano with Shan Deng at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music.

I first met Sonya in this very room when earlier this year she played the piano as part of the Student Musical Recital, in recognition of the work of the Tasmanian Music Teachers' Association.

This year Sonya was awarded the Licentiate in Music Practice and won the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Rising Star competition. She also won prizes at the Hobart and Clarence Eisteddfods and the 2nd prize in the Musical Society of Victoria Eda Schurmann Competition.

Last year she played the Grieg Piano Concerto with the Derwent Symphony Orchestra and on occasions plays the violin with that Orchestra and the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra.

This evening for just 10 minutes or so Sonya will play for you two short pieces; Frederic Chopin's Nocturne Opus 27 No 2 and L'Isle Joyeuse (Happy Island) by Claude Debussy

So ladies and gentlemen I command your complete attention for 10 minutes to listen to this beautiful music played by a very talented young performer in this exquisite Ballroom with its wonderful acoustic.