

GERIATRIC EMERGENCY MEDICINE SEMINAR (GEMSEM 24)
WELCOME RECEPTION
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 2024

Good evening, everyone. I warmly welcome you all to Government House.

I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather, who flourished on Country as part of the South-East Nation of Aboriginal people. We honour them, and today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of Country. I recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

I am delighted to welcome you all to Hobart for your Geriatric Emergency Medicine Seminar, GEMSEM 24, over the next two days. This is the first time Hobart has hosted this important seminar.

Our Tasmanian population is the oldest in the country. According to the latest statistics, Tasmania's median age is over 42 and around 20 per cent of Tasmania's population is 65 years or older. Our population continues to age faster than any other Australian state or territory.

This presents opportunities as well as challenges. Older people can remain engaged and contribute to our community in a wide variety of ways. Many are involved in volunteering activities that assist our community. Many older people also care for children and grandchildren and share their wisdom and experience.

However, as we all know, ageing is associated with physical and cognitive challenges and a range of health issues. As our Tasmanian population continues to age, increased pressure will be put on our healthcare system and our community services. It will also place additional pressure on families who are caring for their loved ones. So, we need to plan for our future.

You have a busy program of discussions and workshops over the next two days, with the theme, 'Navigating the path of complex emergency decisions in older adults'. It

promises to be a very productive seminar and an opportunity to share expertise and best practice with colleagues.

I am unsurprisingly biased that you have chosen a wonderful location for your seminar here in Tasmania. As many of you are visitors to our State, I shall give you a brief sketch of our island. We are the world's 26th largest island. Our population density is low, with about 550,000 people living in an area about the size of Sri Lanka. By contrast, that island nation has a population of around 22 million.

Around half of our State is set aside for national parks and reserves.¹ We are renowned for our clean air, high quality produce, the accessibility of walks and large areas of World Heritage listed wilderness.

Our island has a legacy of complex geology. We have our planet's largest exposure of dolerite, a stunning example being the Organ Pipes rocks on the face of our kunanyi/MountWellington.

We have eleven major lakes and about 3000 smaller ones, many of which are in our central highlands.

And, Tasmania has long been recognised as the principal gateway to Antarctica. The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic and Marine Living Resources Secretariat is headquartered here.

We have several wonderful accessible museums, including TMAG and the Maritime Museum in Hobart, the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston and the Burnie Regional Museum in Burnie.

After your seminar, I hope that you have time to visit some of our natural and historical attractions.

May I conclude by giving those of you from interstate and overseas, a special welcome to our State. On behalf of the people of Tasmania, I welcome you and wish you an enjoyable and productive time.

¹ <https://parks.tas.gov.au/about-us/managing-our-parks-and-reserves/reserve-listing> accessed 22 Mar 23