

**SUPREME COURT OF TASMANIA**  
**RECEPTION TO MARK THE BICENTENARY OF THE FIRST SITTING OF**  
**THE SUPREME COURT OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 10 MAY 2024**

Good evening, everyone, and a very warm welcome to you all to this reception to mark the bicentenary of the first sitting of the Supreme Court of Van Diemen's Land.

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather. I acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of Country. I recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

May I acknowledge among us our Supreme Court's Chief Justice Alan Blow and current justices, and former Chief Justices and Governors, Sir Guy Green and William Cox and former justices. May I also welcome all our interstate Chief Justices and all other justices on this historic occasion for our Supreme Court.

On 7 May 1824, our first Chief Justice, John Lewis Pedder, was sworn into his office by Lieutenant Governor Sorell at the Old Government House, situated between Franklin Square and the Hobart Town Hall. As we all know, the first sitting of the Court occurred 200 years ago on this day.

I shall not say more of our Supreme Court's history, as it is all there in the perfectly timed publication of Justice Stephen Estcourt's well received book, "From Convicts to Computers: Two Hundred Years of the Tasmanian Supreme Court."

Rather, may I talk about some aspects of our Government House, particularly for our interstate guests. In our Drawing Room behind you, we have two paintings of the Old Government House, where Chief Justice Pedder was sworn into office.

The small painting on the Drawing Room southern wall is by Haughton Forrest and was painted from a model that Lady Franklin ordered built. That model is now in our Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

The second painting on the opposite side of the Drawing Room is a delightful Knud Bull, circa 1855. Knud Bull was a young Norwegian living in London. Convicted of forging banknotes, he was sentenced to a long exile in Van Diemen's Land. His forgery skills were put to good painting use, as his works are exceptional for their detail. He depicted Old Government House as a long low building in the centre of the painting and above the waterline. You can test your vision finding the artist's signature. If you can't find it, I am happy to assist.

The foundations of this 70-room neo-Gothic building were laid in the 1850s with completion in 1857. The sandstone used in the construction was excavated from the quarry you passed, as you came in the driveway. The quarry was later landscaped as an ornamental lake in 1875. There was significant convict input into the building of the House, many convicts being skilled tradesmen in stonemasonry, carpentry, plumbing and the like.

The grounds occupy 15 hectares and were laid out in a formal style typical of early Victorian gardens. Additions to the original layout include: an 1889 tennis pavilion with three courts; a Japanese-style ornamental pond; a croquet and bowls lawn, a fruit orchard; a Tasmanian Native Plants Garden; and a Heritage Rose Garden.

I should also report that we have a Vineyard, planted in 2015 with Riesling, Cabernet and Merlot grapes. You have been sampling these wines tonight and I hope you are enjoying them. We are also making gin, flavoured with botanicals of our gardens. Our substantial Kitchen Garden dates to the 1820s and much of what you'll eat this evening is from that garden. And the flowers decorating the House are also grown in our gardens.

In 2016, a French Garden was planted to commemorate the landing of Bruny D'Entrecasteaux from his ships, *L' Esperance* and *Recherche*, at Recherche Bay during his search for La Perouse. Our garden is a replica of the small vegetable garden planted by crew member, Felix Lahaye, on this expedition.

May I come back inside the House and this Ball Room, which boasts the world's largest Huon pine timber floor.

The three grand Bohemian crystal chandeliers, each comprise of over 4,000 pieces and are affectionately known as Crystal, Charlotte, and Cinderella, so named by our Executive Butler, Leigh Millington. Above the mirrors is a double stained-glass window indicating on the interior side the Royal Arms, and outside a rose. It is lit from inside.

In the Dining Room, please look up to the ceiling, which is decorated with hand painted panels of the coats of arms of England, Scotland, and Ireland. These ceilings and the Ball Room ceilings were painted by an ex-convict, John Wiltson, another who was transported to Van Diemen's Land for forgery. Such skills seemed to have been in steady demand here.

At one end of the Dining Room, you will notice two Carrera marble statues representing two of the four seasons. You will also notice two empty alcoves at the opposite end of the room. In 1961, those two summer and autumn statues were loaned to our neighbour, the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Sadly, they did not survive the outdoor weather. Over the fireplace you may also notice four panels, the Orders of the Thistle, Garter, St Patrick, and Bath.

Upstairs are formal visitor bedrooms. The bedroom titled the Queens Bedroom has a secret staircase from the Ante Drawing Room, perhaps for a quick escape from receptions.

In our Main Hallway areas and portico, we have some contemporary Tasmanian artworks, a contrast to the original works on the walls. Importantly, they recognise the work of some of our talented local artists.

Finally, our tower clock is the oldest in Tasmania, originally installed in St David's Church, the predecessor to the Cathedral. It is supported by the keelson of a convict ship, *George III*, which foundered off Bruny Island with the loss of 135 lives in the mid-1900s. Under the clock in the lattice diamonds, the figure '1857' can just be made out. This was the completion date of this House.

On that note, may I conclude, and again warmly welcome you all here.

Please enjoy the reception.