

**RECEPTION TO MARK THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION
OF THE INDIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA**

REMARKS BY

**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**

BALL ROOM, FRIDAY 29 JULY 2022

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to Government House and this reception to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Indian Cultural Society of Tasmania.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

I would also like to acknowledge:

- President Ajit Ramadas and committee members
- Founding members Ikram Naqvi, Dr. Geeta Lad, Brij Datta and Dr Jacob George
- Supporters and friends

Our island State is now more often referred to as multicultural. While most people in Tasmania were born in Australia (80%) there has certainly been a progressive increase in the number of members of our Tasmanian community who were born overseas. In 1971, 10.2% of people were born overseas. This has increased to 15.3% in 2021.

While our Indian community in Tasmania is quite small, it is, itself, quite a multicultural group, with differences in language, religion and linguistic origins. Despite the small size of our Indian community, the Indian Cultural Society of Tasmania has worked hard to welcome all parts of our Indian community as members.

We know that Indian immigrants are well educated and experienced, with some 59% having tertiary or trade qualifications, which explains why Indians lead our 'skilled migration' numbers.

We know, too, that many of these qualifications are in the STEMM (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine) areas that are so important to maintain and improve a technical economy. It is clear that, with these

qualifications and experience, our Indian immigrants contribute substantially to our community.

As an example, our Launceston *Examiner* reported on a citizenship ceremony for 77 new Australians and included specific mention of a couple, the Pothapragadas, who both work at the Launceston General Hospital, across the anesthetic ward and the Intensive Care Unit.¹ Our Indian immigrants also bring significant cultural benefits as well.

That Indian people have a long-standing association with Tasmania is, perhaps, not so well known. There is an extensive history of Indian contacts with Tasmania, reaching back to the early days of the English East India Company. The Company's boats brought Indian sailors to Australia and some of whom made Tasmania their home.

The objectives of your Indian Cultural Society are to celebrate and maintain cultural values and beliefs. Your Society also organises events and provides a platform for our community to learn about the rich and diverse cultures of your homeland.

One of the significant ways that this is achieved is by the support provided by your Society to foster and assist with the formation of the UTAS Indian Youth Society. I am informed that the two Societies plan to work to bring the young and the old together in common purpose.

Fifty years is a very significant milestone for any organisation. I am delighted to be able to acknowledge that milestone with you tonight. I congratulate you for all that you have accomplished in your 50 years to date. I know you have plans for the future to develop the relationship between all Indian groups, as well as with the wider Tasmanian community. I wish you well in bringing us all closer together in understanding and acceptance.

Thank you.

¹ Examiner 27 July 2022 page 3.