

**ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF TASMANIA LTD (RACT)
100 YEAR DINNER
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GLEN ALBYN ESTATE, WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023**

Thank you, Alison [Flakemore, RACT President introduced HE].

I am delighted to be here with you all and to enjoy and celebrate this wonderful centenary evening.

As Alison [Flakemore] mentioned, Governor Sir James O'Grady was the Club's inaugural Patron from 1924 to 1930. All Governors since have been Patron and I am your 16th Patron.

Road Safety is a particularly important issue, reaching out right across the State. With your membership being over 210,000, and the adult population of Tasmania being about 450,000,¹ your membership therefore attracts towards half of the adult population, an exceptional number of members.

Prior to 1923, there had been early groups of non-affiliated motorists formed in Hobart and in Launceston, under various names. Among other activities they conducted what were called "Reliability Runs" between our two main cities. The idea behind these groups was "Reliability and not speed."² So, a safety ethos was built in from the start.

As far as early numbers go, a 1910 report stated there were about a hundred motor vehicles in the north of the state and that a Launceston group, named as the Tasmanian Automobile Club, quote, "which has been in existence for a few years, has worked wonders as far as motoring is concerned."³

Moves towards amalgamation of the southern groups took place on Thursday 8 March 1923 to form a single body. As reported, and I quote: "An enthusiastic

¹ [2021 Tasmania, Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://abs.gov.au/quickstats/2021-tasmania-census-all-persons), accessed 6 March 2023.

² *Daily Post* (Hobart), Saturday 7 November 1908 page 11.

³ *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston), Monday 14 November 1910 page 6.

meeting of motorists was held at the Imperial, Hobart, last night with a view to forming an automobile club of Tasmania. It was decided that an association of motorists, to be known as the Auto-Car Club of Tasmania, should be formed.”⁴

So let me return to Sir James O’Grady. In his first year as Governor, in August 1925, he had an important duty to perform, and I quote: “One of the most forward steps that has been attempted by the Autocar was brought to fruition last night when the well-appointed clubrooms in Collins Street were opened by His Excellency ... And there is every indication of the newly-formed club being just as successful as the old-established clubs in the city.”⁵

So, momentum post-1923 was building. In December 1926, the Launceston group became formally absorbed into the Auto-Car Club of Tasmania. And I quote: “Both clubs being anxious for affiliation, a very good feeling prevailed.”⁶

Alison had also mentioned Premier Joseph Lyons. In March 1927, Lyons was advised through Governor O’Grady’s office, by the Secretary of State for the Dominions Leo Amery, that King George the Vth had been “graciously pleased” to approve the use of the prefix “Royal” by the Autocar Club of Tasmania.⁷

Finally, in 1955 there was the name change from Autocar to Automobile: and to today’s the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania.⁸ That most interesting, decades long road journey – pardon the pun – has since come a long way and resulted in today’s hugely appreciated and admired RACT.

As your 16th Patron, I congratulate all involved with this spirited, hardworking and eminently trustworthy and reliable organisation.

Thank you.

⁴ *Examiner*, Friday 9 March 1923 page 4.

⁵ *Mercury*, Thursday 13 August 1925 page 4.

⁶ *Mercury*, Saturday 11 December 1926 page 6.

⁷ *Mercury*, Tuesday 29 March 1927 page 9.

⁸ Bridges, Stuart, in *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, Hobart, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, page?