

HAMILTON LITERARY SOCIETY ANNUAL LECTURE 2024
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, THURSDAY 4 JULY 2024

Good afternoon. I warmly welcome you all to the Hamilton Literary Society Annual Special Lecture.

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.

I am delighted that this year's guest lecturer is eminent writer and journalist, Hilary Burden. Before her introduction by your Vice-President, Alison Jacob, allow me to make a few comments.

This lecture is always a reminder of the history of this House. Lady Teresa Hamilton and her literary society members used to meet in this Drawing Room. So, I would like to make brief mention of her, with reference to Dr Alison Alexander's Clive Lord Lecture published in 1997, *Teresa Hamilton in Tasmania: First-Wave Feminism In Action*.¹

In the late 1880s, Lady Hamilton was an inspiration to women in Tasmania, promoting their intellectual activity and education, and the welfare of their families. She encouraged women to join societies to promote culture and to promote the good of society generally.²

Dr Alexander has pointed out that, while Lady Hamilton showed little interest in aspects of first-wave feminism, such as women's suffrage or improving conditions for working women, she did influence many changes to women's participation in public life. Lady Hamilton would challenge anyone in her aims to improve society and she tried to reach all classes. She included all women in

¹ Pages and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Volume 131, 1997.

² Ibid page 9.

her addresses, and she supported the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which consisted mainly of lower-middle-class women.

Lady Hamilton supported literary institutions other than this Society, such as the Australian Home Reading Union.³ She also involved herself in a women's refuge home, education for girls, sanitary reform, and was interested in women's sport. So, she was an impressive woman.

This Society, as we all know, began in 1889. Lady Hamilton invited 25 women, here, to tea, to form a society. Its aim was to foster an interest in literature.

This year is the 135th anniversary of the formation of the Hamilton Literary Society. We are all proud it is the oldest continuing literary society in Australia.

As I wrote in my message, literature has a unique power to illuminate, unite and inspire us. Your literary dedication not only enriches the lives of your members, but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the arts within our community.

May I conclude my remarks and hand over to David.

Thank you.

³ Ibid page6