

**OPENING OF THE NEW PREMISES OF THE
SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT SERVICE (INC)
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
114 BATHURST ST, HOBART, THURSDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2024**

Good afternoon, everyone. It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today at the opening of these new premises of the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS).

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.

As Patron of SASS, I am very pleased to continue the association of the Vice-Regal office of Governor and I am honoured to be here with you at the opening of this impressive new facility that will enable SASS both to improve and to expand services and access.

The patronage file at Government House contains some history of the commencement of SASS, written by founding member, Michele Moseley, which I shall summarise.

In early 1986, Terese Henning and Christine Tilley, both lawyers and both known to me, together with Jenny Wilson and Michele Mosley obtained a grant of over \$107,000 to establish the Hobart SASS. In the early 1980s, these women had seen the need for a support service for women who were victims of sexual assault. There were many challenges, including finding funding sources, establishing good working relationships with doctors at the Royal Hobart Hospital, with Tasmania Police, particularly forensic services, and with the legal community. There were huge challenges in changing attitudes as, in the 1980s, sexual assault was seen through a medical/legal lens. A compelling case for change to a feminist collective model had to be researched and

documented with the support of the data and personal stories collected by the 'Women Against Rape' lobby group, which was formed by Marjorie Levis and Jenny Wilson in the 1970s.

Over two years, good working relationships were established and the case for change resulted in the funding grant in 1986 after many years of lobbying. It took "persistence, determination and sheer bloody mindedness."

Now, 37 years later, your Service provides a significant and critical resource of trauma-informed and evidence-based options for those who are survivors of sexual violence and for those who support them. Last financial year, you supported over 1,700 people.

From my work as a judge in the Family and Federal Court of Australia, I know that their experience as survivors of sexual and family violence has a devastating and profound impact.

Prevention is clearly a preferable strategy to deal with these impacts. Early intervention and working towards creating a gender equal society are pre-conditions for addressing violence against women and children. For this reason, SASS also actively provides and promotes education and training. This equips people with tools to prevent sexual violence and to promote an understanding of issues such as consent, and to foster a culture of respect for all. Over 5,500 people participated in SASS Primary Prevention Training last financial year.

In conclusion, on behalf of a grateful community, we thank you for your important work.

In a moment, I will plant a *banksia marginata* along with Kellie Dean and Nic Street to mark this momentous occasion.

And now it gives me great pleasure to formally declare open these new premises of the Sexual Assault Support Service.

Thank you.