

RECEPTION FOR MEMBERS OF THE FRIENDS OF THE THEATRE ROYAL
REMARKS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE ALAN BLOW AO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE
WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2024

Good evening and welcome to Government House for this reception for members of the Friends of the Theatre Royal.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of the land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise and respect their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

It is a great pleasure for my wife, Margaret, and me to host this reception tonight to celebrate the work of the Friends of the Theatre Royal.

We are both avid supporters of the arts in all sorts of forms, and frequent theatregoers, so we understand the enormous role that volunteers play to ensure that the sector remains viable. That is especially the case now during a time when households are coming under increasing financial pressure and are therefore cutting back on discretionary expenditure.

During the COVID lockdown period the performing arts came to a complete stop. Now we have the problem of people staying away because of cost of living pressures.

The Theatre Royal is a jewel of a theatre and an important part of Hobart life. I was very interested to learn that it was powering on, with your organisation's help

on a large scale. You not only provide financial support through fundraising. You are also intimately involved with the operations of the Theatre Royal, from conducting tours, to your work supporting publicity drives such as mailouts, to the small historical archive. It would seem there is not much that you don't do!

It's marvellous that the Friends provide educational experiences for our young people, especially those whose circumstances may, for whatever reason, make it difficult to access opportunities. Your initiative to allow the Theatre to supply buses to regional students so that they can attend the Theatre Royal's Education and Children's Theatre productions is an example of the sort of support that can make a significant difference in the life of a child.

You have also been instrumental in advocating for and arranging increased access for people with disabilities. Access parking and appropriate measures to ensure that all patrons of the Theatre have equality of access to the quality programs on offer adds immeasurably to the wellbeing of our diverse community.

Still speaking of access and young people, I commend you for the support that you provide to the Future Stages initiative. I can only imagine the impact on an aspiring performer of the opportunity to work with the Theatre for an entire year and explore the opportunities available for performers and support staff in the arts industry.

Your recently departed Chief Executive Officer, Simon Wellington, when speaking of the first day of the Future Stages program, when the young participants were asked to improvise a performance on stage as part of their orientation tour, said this: "I think that moment embodies the energy and passion the Friends bring to all we do, both in the custodianship of our history and the empowering of our future."

That said it all.

In conclusion, may I thank you all for the work that you do in support of the Theatre Royal and the arts more generally. You are clearly a valued part of the Theatre community, and rightly so.

So now, please enjoy the reception. I look forward to speaking with you less formally as we have some refreshments together.

Thank you.