

**COUNCIL ON THE AGEING (COTA) TASMANIA
AFTERNOON TEA TO MARK UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
OLDER PERSONS AND TO LAUNCH SENIORS' WEEK 2024
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 2 OCTOBER 2024**

Good afternoon, everyone. I warmly welcome you all to Government House. Today, we celebrate two significant events for 2024 – United Nations International Day of Older Persons, and the launch of Seniors' Week.

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 deep connection to land, sea, and waters.

The 1st October was declared United Nations International Day for Older Persons in 1990, and has been celebrated each year since. According to the UN website,¹ the number of older people, defined as 65 years or older (so I qualify and am included) tripled between 1980 and 2021, to some 761 million. This increase in an ageing population will continue; the average life expectancy is now 75 years, around 25 years longer than in 1950.

Here in Tasmania, we largely respect and treasure our elders. They have built our towns, our economy, and our way of life. We draw lessons from them. There are, however, disturbing stories of abuse and of neglect. We still have more to do.

Seniors' Week 2024 will run from 14 to 20 October and will provide us with an opportunity to celebrate our older citizens, to acknowledge their achievements and contributions, and to consider more ways to support their wellbeing and inclusion. Our Tasmanian population is ageing, but this is something to acknowledge and celebrate.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/older-persons-day> accessed 27 Sept 24

We should reflect upon and recognise the contributions of older people in our society. Older people are involved in the formal economy and have, for quite some time, contributed informal care hours assisting our children and grandchildren. The theme for Seniors' Week this year – *Connecting Generations* – is a reflection of this. Older people continue to be pillars of our families, mentors in our workplaces, and at the heart of our communities.

During this week, there will be many opportunities across our State for older Tasmanians to engage, learn, and celebrate. I encourage everyone to participate, to enjoy these events, and to reflect on how we can all make our communities more age-friendly, and more compassionate.

As we celebrate, we should also acknowledge the challenges many older Tasmanians face, from health and mobility concerns, to social isolation, to financial insecurity. These issues demand our attention and call for policies and solutions that respect the dignity of older people and ensure that they have support to live with purpose and security.

As Governor, I have had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the outstanding work being done by organisations, communities, and individuals across our State to support older people. From local councils working to make public spaces more accessible, community groups organising social activities, to healthcare workers providing compassionate care. These efforts demonstrate our collective commitment to our elders.

Today, may I especially acknowledge and thank all the volunteers, caregivers, and family members who work tirelessly to support our older Tasmanians. I am honoured to be Patron of the Council on the Ageing Tasmania. I acknowledge your significant contributions to ensure that the voices of our older Tasmanians are heard.

May I thank our older Tasmanians for your contributions, your wisdom, and your resilience.

It is now my great pleasure to officially launch Seniors' Week 2024. May it be a time of celebration, reflection, and connection for all Tasmanians. Thank you.