

**UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA
RECEPTION FOR GRADUATES OF
PATHWAYS TO POLITICS FOR WOMEN
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2024**

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to Government House to celebrate the inaugural graduating cohort of our University of Tasmania Pathways to Politics for Women Program.

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 deep connection to land, sea, sky and waters.

This Tasmanian version of the Pathways to Politics for Women Program is both welcomed and crucial. This Program is an initiative of the Trawalla Foundation, Women's Leadership Institute Australia, and the University of Melbourne. Since 2016, the Program has expanded to eight universities across Australia, with our University of Tasmania joining this year.¹

This Program aims to increase the number of women of diverse backgrounds and experience in Australian politics, at all levels, so that our community is better reflected. The Program also aims to, I quote, "provide unparalleled expertise for women who are serious about driving change through political leadership."² End of quote.

The case for increasing the number of women in Australian politics is clear. Despite comprising just over 50% of our population, women remain underrepresented in all levels of government across Australia.³ This imbalance

¹ Pathways to Politics for Women Briefing Pack, courtesy Tania Heideman 25 September 2024

² <https://www.utas.edu.au/study/pathways-to-politics-for-women>, accessed 7/10/24.

³ <https://pmc.gov.au/resources/national-strategy-achieve-gender-equality-discussion-paper/current-state/leadership>.

<https://pathwaystopolitics.org.au/knowledge-hub/scorecard-women-political-representation/#pathways-to-politics>, accessed 7/10/24.

limits the diversity of perspectives in our decision-making processes and potentially narrows the scope of our policies.

This Pathways Program has had a significant effect. Since its inception:

- Nationally over 450 women have completed the program;
- One third approximately, of alumnae have run for political office or pursued preselection;
- And, this year, over 100 program alumnae are running for office across Australia.⁴

The Pathways Program's non-partisan approach, of encouraging women from all political persuasions to enrol and lead, is commendable.

Graduates, you have completed a demanding program. Through, I quote, “comprehensive practical training, workshops, and mentoring...”⁵ you have learned skills and gained knowledge from experienced politicians, leaders, and professionals. You have no doubt connected with experienced women, who can advise and assist you in your future political roles.

Each of you brings a unique and personal perspective to the political table:

- Bailey, your fervour for rural representation should ensure that these voices from all over our State are heard.
- Ebony, your work in sports leadership strengthens your ability to challenge norms and create inclusive spaces.
- Elizabeth, your experience of diverse work gives you wider insights into the everyday challenges faced by Tasmanians.
- Gemma, your legal expertise and public service experience provide a solid foundation for navigating complex policy issues.
- Heather, your commitment to community wellbeing and the environment are issues, reflecting the concerns of many Tasmanians, for which you can advocate.

⁴ Pathways to Politics for Women Briefing Pack, courtesy Tania Heideman 25 September 2024.

⁵ Ibid.

- Jeany, your vision for education reform can help shape the future of learning in our State.
- Kristi, as a Deputy Mayor, you can expand your leadership and community service.
- Rebecca, your advocacy for social justice can focus on our most vulnerable citizens to ensure they are heard; and
- Traycee, your governance experience can focus on encouraging transparency and accountability in our political institutions.⁶

In a moment, I shall have the great pleasure to present each of you with your Pathways to Politics pin. May I extend to each of you my warmest congratulations. I wish each of you the very best for your future in politics. May I hope you can all contribute to both our State of Tasmania and Australia.

Thank you.

⁶ 2024 Pathways to Politics Speaker Information Pack, University of Tasmania.