

**RECEPTION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUNJABI SOCIETY TASMANIA
TO MARK THE DIWALI FESTIVAL 2024
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2024**

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to Government House.

I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose land 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.

Tonight, we celebrate the Punjabi community, as part of Diwali.

Over the past 50 years, Tasmania's Punjabi population has grown from two people to over 5000 — an incredible growth rate! This shows that many people have grown to love Tasmania and settled here.

The establishment of the Punjabi Society Tasmania earlier this year highlights the strong sense of cohesion within the Punjabi community.

This sense of cohesion saw the Punjabi community providing food and other support during the COVID pandemic. Many Tasmanians benefited from this generosity and the community's desire to help those in need.

Since its inception, the Punjabi Society has facilitated two major events for its community. The first event, *Vaisakhi*, was held in April. We were honoured to attend, along with around 900 community members — it was a memorable experience.

The second was a recent sports event at the Creek Road netball facility. Over 600 people enjoyed athletics and other traditional novelty activities such as arm-wrestling, 3-legged races, and tug-of-war. And, of course, excellent food!

These events are of benefit to the Punjabi community and all Tasmanians. Events such as Diwali and the Society activities help ensure that we share our stories and cultures and live in harmony and understanding.

Another exciting development is the planned cultural centre for Cambridge, on the site of the current community kitchen. This centre will eventually be a hub for learning and education about Punjabi heritage and culture for all people.

It will incorporate the community kitchen and provide a place of worship for the Sikh community. It establishes a physical presence for the community and a meeting place.

I am pleased to be with you tonight to help celebrate your community. The spirit of Diwali – the symbolism of the inner light that protects us from spiritual darkness – extends to the elevation of knowledge over ignorance and feelings of safety over anxiety.

Please enjoy your reception. Thank you.