

The Governor of Tasmania

Growing Community Engagement

In June I started my third year as Governor of Tasmania. How quickly the first two years have passed! The role of Governor consists of three main categories of work: constitutional, ceremonial, and community.

I enjoy my role and work as Governor immensely. I particularly enjoy my community engagement role duties, which account for the largest commitment of my time. I would like to explain briefly about this part of my role and also the community work that we are doing at Government House and around our State.

My community engagement role aims to foster a sense of unity and to promote values that support a strong community through mutual respect, tolerance, and goodwill. I also encourage and recognise high and dedicated achievement in community service, education, industry, the arts, and sport.

My community engagement duties include attending statewide events for local, state, or national organisations; opening international or national conferences; hosting visiting Ambassadors, High Commissioners and other dignitaries; and acting as patron of over 130 organisations. Importantly, I visit

each of our 29 Municipal Councils throughout my five-year term. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about and connect with all our regions and communities in Tasmania.

One of my priorities in my term is to increase public awareness and understanding of my office by opening and extending access to Government House to as many members of our community as possible, through events such as receptions, State Room Tours, Behind the Scenes Tours and Garden Tours; fundraising events; musical events; and garden events. School groups also visit Government House as part of their civic education about our system of government. They also much enjoy garden and house tours.

The hire by the public of our tennis courts and bowls/croquet green during October to March at weekends, also increases access to our grounds.

One initiative implemented during my term aligns closely with my priorities of improving education, food security and youth engagement. The establishment of a community garden at Government House not only provides produce to community groups, but also gives school students an opportunity to learn about fresh produce and links them to volunteering and food distribution.

Our Estate Gardens Manager, Tara Edmonson, and her garden team identified an appropriate space within Government House grounds to plant, produce and ensure continuous growth for use and distribution of vegetables and herbs among the community. The first planting occurred in December 2022 in partnership with *Eat Well Tasmania*, represented by State Manager Carl Saunder, and *School Food Matters*, represented by Project Manager Julie Dunbabin. Produce was harvested for distribution into the *School Food Matters* program at the beginning of this school year and continues throughout the year. Over 200 boxes of produce have been provided to the project. *Loaves and Fishes*, represented by Aaron Kropf, has also become involved in the project.

The next stage of our community garden project commences in August 2023. This will involve student volunteers in the community garden and across other Government House food produce areas. Students will participate in a range of activities, including seasonal bed preparation, planting, harvesting, weeding, greenhouse propagation and seedling maintenance. Students can be involved with the harvesting of produce that is being collected by *Loaves and Fishes* for the *School Food Matters* program. Students will travel to Government House in buses provided by *Loaves and*

Fishes. Government House will provide garden tools and gloves and morning tea for the students. As the project develops and is assessed, we plan to involve other school groups.

Not only does our community garden project give students the opportunity to learn about fresh produce, they will learn about volunteering and community food distribution. The students will have an opportunity to see Government House and its beautiful gardens, and to learn something about the role of Governor.

In addition to our community garden, our Government House vegetable and fruit gardens provide our community with produce throughout the year. Our Executive Chef and Community Engagement Facilitator, Ainstie Wagner, and her Kitchen team, largely using garden produce, cooked 1500 kilograms of meals. These were labelled and frozen to provide to our Salvation Army for Homelessness Week in 2022. The Kitchen team continued to provide meals to the Salvation Army during this year. The team is already starting to cook meals for Homelessness Week in August.

For several years, Ainstie has also been working with the Hobart Women's Shelter and has run a weekly cooking class called "Cook and Connect" for the residents and their children. Ainstie and her Kitchen team provide

work experience to kitchen studies students and work placements and have run a “Kids To Farms” project for school groups.

We are also planning for more visitors. My husband, Don, chairs a senior staff committee developing an Adaptive Re-use Project, to convert some original 1850s workshops, stables, coach house, loft and other buildings to accommodate modern visitor facilities, including a café, a museum, interpretation centre, gift shop, and conveniences.

This project will support increased access and bring people closer to Government House. This increased access also aims to convey the meaning and relevance of a modern Governor, exercising the powers of a Head of State. All the income raised from these new facilities will be used for selected heritage maintenance projects at Government House.

As Governor, I am delighted to be involved with all these important worthwhile projects, and to further engage with the many organisations which help and support our Tasmanian communities.