**Launch of TASCAT**

Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us today to recognise the commencement of TASCAT. I join our Principal Registrar Jarrod in welcoming you Attorney General together with the Deputy Presidents of TASCAT, representatives of the Department of Justice, members of the newly established TASCAT Consultative Forum, and all of you who have joined us here today.

I would particularly like to thank Auntie Brenda Hodge welcoming us onto aboriginal land today. It is of the utmost importance that the Tribunal be welcomed onto country and that we acknowledge country. Thank you Auntie Brenda.

The commencement of TASCAT today represents the result of extensive work by many towards an objective. The work involved laying the foundations, both through legislation and physically, for TASCAT to exist. The objective of that toil was to establish a single entry Tribunal that provides an accessible service for all in the Tasmanian community.

Speaking for myself, after 6 months of intense preparations, I am certainly glad we have reached this day. There were moments here last Friday as the alarms sounded, and the multiple fire trucks arrived as we all huddled outside in the driving rain, that it seemed we may have gone up like a bombe alaska before we even had begun. Thankfully, there was no fire.

Well, while it has been a bit of a sprint to the finish line, I think it is safe to say that TASCAT has been in the pipeline for nigh on 20 years. Congratulations Attorney General that the Tribunal has actually come to life on your watch. I am well aware, especially in recent weeks, that your determination to bring the amalgamation together has played a vital role in bringing us to this day. Thank you. It is in no small way due to your direct interventions that we join the existing CATs or Super Tribunals already in place around the country.

I personally am deeply honoured and grateful that I have been afforded the opportunity to be the inaugural President of TASCAT, not to mention, the opportunity to return to my home state of Tasmania. I am committed during the course of my term with TASCAT to ensure that we continue to review our practice and procedure, enhance our technology, and develop our values, to further the objectives of the Tribunal as legislated in s 10 of the TASCAT Act. As was made clear in the significant decision of Burns v Corbett, Tribunals are not Courts. We should embrace this difference and take full advantage of the flexibility provided to Tribunals to adapt how we conduct our work to suit the needs of those who come before us. This is especially so for TASCAT where we estimate that more than 80% of all proceedings that will come before us in our first year will have at the centre of the matter a person who is said to have either a mental illness of some level of decision making incapacity.

TASCAT has not been a process of simply housing nine existing bodies together. It has involved the coming together of eight specialist Tribunals and one Board into a single Tribunal whilst preserving the breadth of experience and collective acumen of the existing entities. Our challenge, together, going forward will be striking the right balance between harmonisation and retaining necessary differences. Whilst hopefully the public will benefit from TASCAT being a “One Stop Shop”, we must also be vigilant in remembering that “not one size fits all”.

There are a number of thank yous and acknowledgements I wish to make.

First, thank you to Deputy Presidents Yvonne Chaperon, Alison Clues, Marica Duvnjak, and Rowena Holder. Having been the head of a Tribunal in NSW that was amalgamated along with 22 other Tribunals to form NCAT, I have some insight as to how challenging, both professionally and personally, this process can be. Each of you have worked collaboratively to bring TASCAT to fruition. I thank you for your work, your expertise and your camaraderie.

I also with to thank Senior Member Luci Jack for the significant input she has provided into the amalgamation process. Thank you to all of the, now, members and staff of TASCAT. There has been a huge amount of preparation and training leading up to amalgamation. Thank you all.

I wish to thank those in the Department of Justice for their support and guidance. Thank you Secretary Ginna Webster and Deputy Secretary Kristy Bourne. Your commitment and you support, especially when the hard decisions have had to be made, has been unwavering. Whilst many have contributed to the “project phase” of TASCAT, I am well aware of the detailed work undertaken by both Brad Wagg and David Sealy. Thank you. I also acknowledge the work of all those who contributed to making these purpose built premises come into reality. I am pretty sure that no other CAT that came about through amalgamation had the benefit of starting out in their own purpose built premises, all under one roof on day one. Interestingly, it was pointed out to me only yesterday that but for a decision in the year 2000 of RMPAT, now the Resource and Planning Stream of TASACT, the entrance to the Tribunal may not have had the heritage value it currently does given the then owner wanted all buildings on 38 Barrack Street demolished for car parking purposes.

Now I turn to the legislation. What a feat. Miraculously coming in at exactly 400 pages, I note that through its passage through Parliament the Bills were invariably described by Members in both Houses as “massive, “awesome” and perhaps “unprecedented” in their size and complexity. Thank you to the officers in Strategic Policy and Legislation who drove the process, especially Brooke Craven and Petr Divis. Over these last few intense months I have developed a huge respect for the skills it takes to draft legislation. Those skills we are fortunate to have in this state in abundance through Robyn Webb, Chief Parliamentary Counsel. Thank you Robyn for the time you have spent on the TASCAT legislation knowing over that same time you had a significant workload.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Jarrod Bryan has made to making today a reality. Jarrod laid the ground work for TASCAT through his many years of project work in the Department of Justice researching and developing proposals for amalgamation in Tasmania. We are all fortunate that in recent months he has been performing the role of Principal Registrar and driving the internal work required for TASCAT to start. His expertise, diplomacy, humanity and in more recent days, sense of humour, have guided our Members and staff admirably to this point. I know you have had some sleepless nights of late Jarrod. Not every organisation looks to change and amalgamate nine websites, implement a new phone system, change email addresses, and some more, all on the one day.

Finally, I would like to thank Hilary Harris for the personal support she has provided me since I commenced in my role in May. Thank you for keeping me organised.

To conclude, whilst it may be satisfying, there is a risk in listening only to words of congratulation or positive speeches about your organisation. To avoid the pitfalls of being self-referential, TASCAT needs to hear the views and experiences of those who appear before it. To this end, the TASCAT Consultative Forum has been established and I am grateful to those organisations who have agreed to participate in this forum, most of whom are represented here today. The forum will allow for the Tribunal to promote accountability and transparency of its operations, whilst provide an avenue for our stakeholders to provide suggestions for how we can improve.

Thank you and let the work continue.

**Malcolm Schyvens**

**President – TASCAT**

**5 November 2021**