

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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## **UTAS honoured to host inaugural Sir James Plimsoll lecture**

The University of Tasmania will host one of Australia's most prestigious annual lecture series, with the launch tomorrow night of the inaugural Sir James Plimsoll lecture on the topic of Australian diplomacy.

UTAS Vice Chancellor, Professor Daryl Le Grew, said it was an honour for UTAS to host the inaugural Sir James Plimsoll lecture, which honours the memory of one of Tasmania's most loved Governors.

The inaugural speaker will be Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer, who worked closely with the late Sir James and who also has personal ties to Tasmania.

"We are delighted to be involved with such a prestigious event and welcome the opportunity to further honour the memory and work of Sir James, who was a much loved Governor of Tasmania and Patron of the Arts," Professor Le Grew said.

"While the Downer name may be synonymous with South Australia, the family also has many ties with Tasmania, given that the current Minister's Father, Sir Alexander, attended Hutchins School in the 1920s.

"Further his Mother lived in Tasmania for some years, so it is with the warmest of wishes we welcome Mr Downer back to the State."

Born in Sydney on April 25, 1917, Sir James Plimsoll AC, CBE, KstJ, not only served his country in a long and highly distinguished diplomatic career, but became one of the most respected Governors of Tasmania and much loved patron of the arts at the University of Tasmania.

Sir James began his diplomatic career in the late 1940s and subsequently rose through the ranks to serve in many of Australia's most senior diplomatic postings.

While serving as the Ambassador in Brussels he met a young diplomat, Alexander Downer, who told a recent ABC Australian Story program that Sir James was a great influence and mentor on his life.

Sir James took up his position as Governor of Tasmania in 1982, and thus began his love of, and commitment to, not just the arts in Tasmania, but also the performing arts. A man of the people, Sir James was renowned for turning up, unannounced, to performances in the most remote areas of Tasmania.

A particular friend of the University of Tasmania, Sir James is remembered for his patronage and support through a memorial bust of him that takes pride of place in the University's Plimsoll Arts Centre, located in Hunter Street, near Hobart's waterfront.

Sir James died in his office at Government House, Hobart, on 8 May 1987, shortly after the Queen had extended his term for a further three years.

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