

Legislative Council
Hansard
Tuesday 18 August 2026

[excerpt...]

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Hobart Repertory Theatre Society

[11.12 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Thank you, Mr President. I rise today to celebrate a much-treasured local theatre institution, the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, the Rep or Hobart Rep, for short. The Hobart Rep is a wonderful volunteer-run community theatre organisation, which has brought the magic of theatre and performance to our community and inspired audiences for generations. In fact, for 100 years.

With around 350 members, Hobart Rep has 250 or so active members, and it takes the passion and dedication of a whole tribe to bring a theatre society to life. Front of house, on stage, and backstage, board and committee members, and of course, wardrobe and props departments are essential. It's the dedication and care of this group of talented people that has ensured the theatre is a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone and fosters a deep appreciation for the performing arts in our community.

Mr Rob Valentine, our dear friend and former colleague in this place, was patron of Hobart Rep for a very long time. Beginning, I believe, while he was still the Lord Mayor of Hobart and through to 2024, when he retired from this place. He moved on from being patron and it was with immense honour and privilege to follow in Rob's footsteps in 2024 to be invited to become patron of the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, a position that I cherish. Sadly, Mr Valentine couldn't join us here today, however I did contact him and he has sent through a message. Firstly, a message to members in this place. Rob says: [tbc 11.14]

Hi to all. The past elder member is still watching your antics between leisurely breaks, and it makes interesting theatre.

On the matter of celebrating the 100 years of the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, Rob commented this:

Having been a past patron of Hobart Rep for many years, I'm very disappointed not to be able to personally attend the acknowledgement this morning of their 100 years of service to the Hobart community as a much-respected amateur theatre company.

Theatre provides the community with so much more than it ever receives in return from governments at all levels. It adds immeasurably to community and member wellbeing, and I wish the society all the best as they commence their journey towards their next 100-year milestone. Break a leg.

Rob certainly left big shoes to fill, Mr President, but what a joy it is to be able to take up the baton and do my best to be also a champion for the Rep.

Mr President, not only are we recognising a wonderful organisation today in the Chamber, we're celebrating a very significant birthday milestone. This year, on 21 July, the Rep celebrated a remarkable milestone: its 100 birthday. A century of storytelling in the theatre, brought to life by thousands of Tasmanians who have been involved as performers, directors, technicians, designers, builders, committee members and volunteers. Mr President, 100 years ago, on 21 July 1926, a group of passionate and enthusiastic theatre lovers attended a meeting held in the Mayor's reception room at Hobart Town Hall, just up the way, where they decided to form the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society. This historic moment saw the establishment of Tasmania's oldest continuously operating theatre company, which is now the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society.

The *Mercury* article which reported on this first meeting had an article titled 'Hobart Society formed - enthusiastic meeting', the very next day on 22 July. The article recounted the evening of the twenty-first and the meeting which occurred in which apparently the Mayor, Alderman EJ Rogers, presided and noted the following. [tbc 11.16]

The main objects of this enterprise were the provision of regular changes of program, representing the best writings of authors of all ages and especially of modern British writers, efficient production and popular pieces.

He hoped that the Hobart Society would be highly successful and Mr President, it certainly has proven to be so. Over the past century Hobart Rep has staged 692 productions, the first of which was *Mice and Men* by Madeleine Lucette Ryley, staged at the Theatre Royal on the 10 February 1927. Hobart Rep then found its permanent home in the 1936-37 year when it purchased the former Amuzu Theatre and transformed it into the Playhouse Theatre, a beautiful historic building in the heart of Hobart treasured by all. The first production held at the Playhouse Theatre, in November 1938, was Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, directed by Olive Wilton, which launched the theatre into a new era with Hobart Rep.

Since then, generations of members and volunteers have cared for, preserved and improved the Playhouse Theatre and it remains one of Tasmania's longest running community art venues. The Hobart Repertory Theatre Society has become a thriving institution of community theatre in the south of our state, representing a century of community participation in the arts. It would not have been possible without the generations of talented and committed people who generously contributed their time and expertise and passion to enrich Tasmania's cultural life. I congratulate everyone who has played a part in the first century of the Hobart Repertory Theatre Society, no matter how big or small your role has been. I extend my best wishes to the Rep as it looks ahead to the next act, hopefully, another 100 years and many more, Mr President.