

**CATHOLIC EDUCATION TASMANIA AND SPEECH PATHOLOGY TASMANIA
RECEPTION TO CELEBRATE COLLABORATION TO SCREEN FOR SPEECH,
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PROBLEMS K-2
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE BALL ROOM, THURSDAY 30 JUNE 2022**

Vice-Regal Salute

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to this reception to celebrate an important collaboration between educators and speech pathologists designed to improve educational outcomes.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

We gather this evening to celebrate the partnership between Catholic Education Tasmania and Tasmanian Speech Pathologists over the past decade. Catholic Education has joined with speech pathologists to develop an efficient evidence-based triaging process for early detection of, and response to, speech, language, and literacy problems in children in the Kinder to Grade 2 school years in Catholic schools around the state.

Literacy may be defined in slightly different ways. Our Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment indicates that literacy involves multiple modes or systems of making meaning, that include spoken and written language, as well as video, audio, gestural and spatial modes.¹²

We know that literacy and numeracy are the keys to success in education. However, across Australia, nearly half of our population has difficulty with their ability to use language and numbers, in their daily lives.³

¹ https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1365573/lit1-What-is-literacy-final.pdf

² <https://www.utas.edu.au/underwood-centre/publications-and-resources/fact-sheets>

³ <https://26ten.tas.gov.au/resources/Documents/OECD%20Stats%20for%20Tasmania%20V2.pdf>

For at-risk children with difficulties in language development, they can be impacted long-term unless they are provided with assistance to improve their understanding of difficult concepts; the conventions of print, phonological awareness, knowledge of letters, reading decoding, and reading comprehension.⁴ Early speech sound disorder combined with other risk factors, such as language impairment, have been shown to have negative consequences on literacy development.⁵

Most intervention programs rely on a teacher or parent recognising that there is a problem. For example, the child may be self-conscious about their speech, or they may be teased or bullied because of it. The benefit of the project, that we celebrate this evening, is that science-based screening and testing across the school cohort enables early targeting of interventions. These interventions are designed to address and overcome the detrimental impact of deficiencies in speech and literacy in early education that have the potential to adversely affect future educational outcomes.⁶

Programs like this pay significant dividends. In a small Catholic Tasmanian School, testing before and after a year-long phonemic awareness skills class during the preparatory year demonstrated fine results. At the beginning of the testing, around 15% of students were assessed as being in the average range for phonemic awareness. By the end of the year, 74% were in that range. The outcomes for students with neurodevelopmental issues were even more impressive, from 9% to 82% in the normal range over the same time period.⁷

It is clear that, with explicit instruction and support, literacy can be improved significantly and that students with multiple risk factors benefit considerably from these programs. However, it is not only speech pathologists who contribute to these outcomes. They partner with teacher assistants, student support coordinators, and importantly, on the administrative and financial support provided by the Catholic Education Office. I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved in this important collaboration.

Speech Pathologist Rosalie Martin will speak shortly about the science behind the screening program and the way that it expedites access to specialist interventions, in

⁴ Cadima et al 2009. *Environmental risk factors and children's literacy skills during the transition to elementary school* <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0165025409345045>

⁵ Edwards (2022), *When does speech sound disorder matter for literacy? The role of disordered speech errors, co-occurring language impairment and family risk of dyslexia*. *J Child Psychol Psychiatr*. 58: 197-205. [doi:10.1111/jcpp.12648](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12648)

⁶ <https://hobart.catholic.org.au/2022/02/03/catholics-schools-across-tasmania-to-raise-the-bar-for-literacy/> accessed 28 June 22

⁷ [Towards #100PercentLiteracy: 9% to 82% in a year - Speech Pathology Tasmania \(spt.com.au\)](https://www.spt.com.au/news/towards-100-percent-literacy-9-to-82-in-a-year) accessed 27 June 22

many cases before the issues are identified by parents or educators. Dr Gerard Gaskin will then outline the benefits of the program for individual students, and across the Catholic Education Tasmania group of schools.

After they have spoken, we have a very special presentation to make.

In conclusion, thank you all for your work and for your continuing efforts to improve the literacy and learning of our at-risk students. You are helping them to fully engage with education and all of its benefits. I wish you all continuing success in your important work.

David...

HE moves off stage

OS invites:

Rosie to speak (remain on stage)

Gerard to speak (remain on stage)

On conclusion...

Rosie describes and asks HE to present the scholarship certificate

HE moves back on to stage

Lisa moves to stage

HE presents certificate

Round of applause (photo op)

HE concludes formalities and invites all to enjoy the reception