

TOAST FOR KIDS CHARITY GALA 2022
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
PARANAPLE CONVENTION CENTRE, DEVONPORT
SATURDAY 13 AUGUST 2022

Thank you, Tom *[Johnson, MC,]* for your kind introduction and a very good evening to all from Don and I.

I pay 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.

[As Steve mentioned] Don and I are the inaugural Joint Patrons of Toast for Kids. We are very proud to be associated with such an important Tasmanian charity in your tenth year of operation in the Devonport, Latrobe and Kentish municipalities. So, as your patrons we thank each of you for being here at this gala evening fundraiser.

Thank you, Steve, for telling us the 10-year story of Toast for Kids. It is an uplifting story, but also a confronting one, setting out the harsh reality that many young people depend on school breakfast clubs because of difficult family and personal circumstances.

Significantly, the Toast for Kids aim is, I quote, to “break the cycle of poverty, poor health, social exclusion, and helplessness, through and by supporting emergency food relief, food security and education.”¹

Children who are exposed to food insecurity are at high risk of adverse health outcomes later in life, including cardiovascular disease, obstructive pulmonary disease, cancers, asthma, autoimmune disease, and depression.²

As many as one in five children in Australia attend school without eating breakfast. Approximately 15% arrive at school without lunch, or without the

¹ [Toast for Kids Charity Inc. | Facebook](#)

² Ibid.

means to buy it. Hunger and undernourishment can lead to lower math scores, attention problems, and behaviour, emotional, and academic problems.³

Missing breakfast can affect academic performance and worsen health. It can lead to a slower metabolism, an increase in stress hormone levels, an increased risk of heart disease, and a drop in blood sugar levels. The impact can be lifelong.⁴

School breakfast clubs mean that children are not hungry when they commence their school day. These programs also have long-lasting, positive effects on academic achievement and health – helping break the cycle of poverty and food insecurity.⁵

This is why your financial contributions this evening are so important towards supporting Toast for Kids and providing two nutritional meals for each dollar raised.

An important part of Toast for Kids' aim is to break the cycle of poverty through education also. We know that in Tasmania many socio-economic indicators show that we have a long way to go to meet a reasonable Australian standard of education for our young people.

Also, some 48 per cent of adult Tasmanians are considered functionally illiterate. This indicates a deep-rooted problem – when parents struggle to read and fill in forms for themselves, how can they then help their children to read and write?

This is why Toast for Kids is so valuable to our community.

Don and I have seen other literacy and education support organisations in our State. As examples: 26Ten is a network of organisations and individuals working together to improve adult literacy and numeracy in our State; Rosie Martin's Speech Pathology Tasmania works to improve literacy in children, and adults in prison; and the Department of Education has the B4 Early Years Coalition.

May I also mention that at Government House this year, two musical educators, Frances Underwood and Catherine Cretan, through the Underwood Centre, regularly hold music sessions with babies and their parents. It is well known that music's sounds and rhythms have the capacity to help "awaken" cognitive processes prior to language acquisition.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid.

May I now turn to the “soft” launch of Narelda Joy’s charmingly written and beautifully illustrated *Tassie Rhymes for little tigers*. It is published especially for the Help Babies Learn project of Toast for Kids. This is a “soft” launch because the official launch is tomorrow. Unfortunately, Don and I are apologies, unable to attend as we must travel back to Hobart.

Narelda is here [*sitting next to HE*] and we have had an opportunity to discuss the wonderful aim of this book, with its array of Tasmanian birds and animals. We shall hear shortly Hillcrest Primary School students reciting the “Tassie is the Place for Me” rhyme in a video recording.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Children’s Book Council of Australia, Tasmanian Branch, for your support for the project. I also thank Impress Print, here in Devonport, for printing the book.

Tassie Rhymes for little tigers, as the title suggests, is a Tasmanian-themed picture book, featuring Tasmanian fauna. It is suitable for nought to five- year-olds, and includes an index of indigenous names for our Tasmanian fauna. I understand and am pleased to hear that a braille/low vision and dyslexic companion versions are also being created.

I can give a personal commendation to *Tassie Rhymes for little tigers* because two of our grandsons listened to the rhymes this morning and enjoyed the beautiful illustrations. Four-year-old Lachie said he loved the book.

Commendably, this publication will be available free of charge to families, to provide maximum encouragement to parents to read to their newborns and while they are still very young. I mentioned earlier the benefits of music for very young people. Well, reading aloud carries exactly the same benefits. Reading aloud to newborn babies has demonstrable benefits as the brain grows and develops. May I give some reasons why:

- By the age of three, a baby’s brain has grown to approximately 80 per cent of its adult size.
- Introducing verbal sound effects, facial expressions, colour and shapes help link the brain neurons during the first three years of a baby’s life.
- Newborns begin learning from hearing, and by seeing the parental facial expressions, again and again.

I would also like to say that parents themselves can obtain huge rewards from seeing their infant's increasing recognition of these repeated sounds. The Tassie Rhymes book can be a bridge between parent and child.

Let us now hear the Hillcrest pupils – reciting “Tassie is the place for me”.

[video recording activated ... concludes]

[HE leads applause]

In conclusion, may I congratulate Narelda and all the outstanding work of Toast for Kids, in this your tenth year. To Steve Martin, President, and colleagues: Janet Edmunds, Susanne Martin, Christian McGee, Deanne Evans, Brad and Kate Von Rock, we thank you for all your work.

[HE leads applause]

The Silent Auction and Novelty Raffle are further opportunities to be generous this evening – as well as being good fun. As Governor, I cannot order you to dig deep, but I do encourage you to do so.

Please enjoy the rest of the evening.

Thank you.