

26TEN WEEK 2023
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BALL ROOM, TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2023

[Vice-Regal Salute is played]

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to this reception to mark 26TEN Week 2023.

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 and recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea and waters.

This evening we have a wonderful cross-section of guests associated with 26TEN, including:

- 26TEN Coalition Members, staff and volunteers;
- Representatives of member organisations and supporters;
- adult literacy trainers and tutors;
- grant recipients; and
- Government representatives.

Together, you are all a fine indication of the strength and vitality of 26TEN, now in your eleventh year. You first achieved demonstrable outcomes in improving literacy and numeracy skills among our adult population, across many of our working and community sectors, and across our island.

Your theme for this year is clear and positive: “Making numbers work for you.” The examples on your website of numbers-related issues show the importance of your work to assist and encourage numeracy. I mention just two, of many:

- reading a bus timetable and working out which bus to catch;
- working out the correct dose of medicine to take.

An OECD study, in 2017, found that those with poor numeracy skills were less likely to receive workplace training. Adults with poor skills were reported to be more likely to report a long-term illness and about twice as likely to suffer symptoms of depression.¹

This OECD study also found that higher levels of literacy and numeracy have a positive impact on the health, wellbeing and prosperity of individuals and, importantly, of the broader society.²

Numeracy frequently has its own set of vocabulary and terminology, which means that reading and comprehension skills are essential for understanding mathematical concepts.³

This all emphasises the critical importance of this year's focus on numeracy. Formal 26TEN support is therefore of great importance. In this respect, I understand that your employer workplace grants are encouraging and flexible, with their current range of five-to-fifty thousand dollars and for up to two years,⁴ and with a focus on industries whose employees have minimal or no qualifications and low literacy.

Just ten years ago, direct educational interventions into industry and other workplaces were probably hard to imagine. Yet the vision and dedication of those who started 26TEN, and those who carried it forward, must be acknowledged. As Governor, I thank each and all of you for your efforts.

May I conclude with just one mention of your incremental success in the 26TEN story. Glenorchy City Council reports that, and I quote:

“The Council had already done a basic language, literacy and numeracy assessment that showed that nearly half its workforce didn't have the skills that are now needed to work well and be safe ... Since providing literacy and

¹ Notes (page 3) attached to 20 October 2023 email from Allison Mitchell, 26TEN Services Coordinator to David Owen.

² Allison Mitchell notes page 1.

³ Allison Mitchell notes page 1.

⁴ [Information for Applicants - 26TEN Workplace Grants 2023-24.pdf](#), accessed 20 October 2023.

numeracy training there has been a strong improvement in the details provided in incident reporting and an improvement in general workplace health and safety ...

“Employees have said:

‘Developing spelling skills makes me feel good within myself, and I feel smarter, like I am getting somewhere.’

‘I have a better understanding of the importance of correct and concise reporting.’

End of quote.

These are fine endorsements of 26TEN.

Thank you all again and I wish you all the best for 26TEN Week 2023.

[David invites Malcolm Wells, 26TEN Coalition Members Chair, to respond.]