

26TEN LITERACY AWARENESS WORKSHOP “26 TEN STEPS”
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
BALL ROOM, 6.00 pm WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2020

Please be seated.

Dick and I warmly welcome you to 26TEN steps: a literacy awareness workshop celebrating 26TEN Week.

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, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

This year we also celebrate of 26TEN’s eighth birthday and much good work has been done in this relatively brief time. The theme for this year – “Let 26TEN Change your World” – is therefore appropriately positive

As Governor for six of those years, I have appreciated and been impressed by the work of 26TEN. This began with a briefing about the work of 26TEN, then visiting a group of employees at Houston Farms who benefited by the assistance of 26TEN tutors – not just in terms of their literacy, but also numeracy and oral communications; watching a literacy tutor in action at the Glenorchy Library and hearing the stories of individuals who have indeed changed their world with 26TEN.

And the stories of these adult learners are inspiring not only because they gain reading, writing and maths skills; very importantly for them they also gain confidence to do more in their workplaces, their communities, and with their families.

The statistics are shocking – 28 per cent of adults are functionally illiterate. As Tasmania concentrates on the continuing social and economic COVID-19 recovery, we simply cannot afford to miss out on the high value contributions of any of our people.

This is why I really appreciate being able to welcome the 26TEN Coalition here this evening, and in particular, your four new members, who will extend the reach of 26TEN. So we welcome:

Marta Dusseldorp, representing the arts, culture and media sector;

Gail Eaton-Briggs, adult learning and trades;

Allyson Warrington, aged and disability care;

and Dick Warner, agriculture.

Your commitment and the commitment of all 26TEN Coalition members reflects the value we should all place on building literacy and numeracy skills.

Indeed if we are to be the resilient, prosperous state we aspire to be, everyone needs to work together to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of Tasmanians.

Not only do 26TEN Coalition members contribute to the development of the 26TEN Tasmania Strategy, you also deal in positive persuasion. That is, you are well placed to positively persuade employers, teachers, service providers, bureaucrats, local council members, politicians and others to take up the cause.

Allyson, Gail, Marta and Dick, you are joining the Coalition at a time when your energy, knowledge and networks are needed more than ever. One reason for this is because we're at the mid-point of the 26TEN Tasmania Strategy. When this was launched five years ago it had the somewhat dubious distinction of being the only state-wide, long-term and collaborative plan for tackling low literacy in Australia. So what an important Strategy decision it was back then, and without a doubt 26TEN remains the leader in this work.

Five years on, the impact of the Strategy has been demonstrated in a new report, *26TEN in 2020*: showing how far we have come as a state towards better adult literacy and numeracy in Tasmania and what we have learned.

The impact has been truly positive, with the 26TEN Network now encompassing 960 members.

Over 1,300 people have volunteered and completed training to be adult literacy tutors.

And 90 per cent of adults who have been supported by Libraries Tasmania – a prominent 26TEN member – say that they have improved their quality of life.

I will take a keen interest in supporting Dick in his new role and look forward to meeting the challenges ahead.

So it is that for the first challenge, I invite the new Coalition members to join me in the 26TEN Steps this evening: an activity designed to increase understanding of the complex issues surrounding adult literacy.

I'll now hand over to Sue Costello, Manager of 26TEN, to introduce the 26TEN Steps, an activity designed to improve our understanding of the complex issues that make adult literacy a persistent and widespread problem.

Thank you.