

**26TEN WEEK RECEPTION  
REMARKS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA,  
DRAWING ROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2019**

Good evening and welcome to this reception to mark 26TEN Week and to celebrate the seventh anniversary of 26TEN.

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.

May I acknowledge among you:

- Siobhan Gaskell, Convenor 26TEN Coalition and fellow Members Kym Goodes and Malcolm Wells;
- Sue Costello, Manager 26TEN;
- Allison Mitchell 26TEN Services Coordinator.

I'd like to begin by commenting on the importance of the 26TEN Week theme: *Let's Talk*.

At one level the theme refers to the speaking and listening skills we use every day. They can be categorised:

- Our verbal communication skills connect us to our families and friends, workplaces and communities; these skills enable us to participate in society, to share information, and to understand the world.
- We express and clarify our thoughts and feelings through talking and listening.
- Whereas adults who lack these skills may find it hard to say what they are thinking or to let people know what they want. They may find it hard to understand and share information.

- This can lead to misunderstandings and missed opportunities. It can lead to frustration, loss of confidence and isolation.
- So it's important that we pay attention to what we say and give people time to respond.
- And it's critically important that we speak to our children, from the time they are born – singing, rhyming, talking – because this prepares babies and toddlers for learning to read and write. Eighty percent of brain development occurs in the first three years of life and interacting verbally with children from 0-3 is vital.

We who are part of 26TEN need to keep talking because there are still many people in Tasmania who do not know about 26TEN, the campaign for adult literacy. We know that better literacy and numeracy means a better Tasmania for all and we have to broaden that message.

So for example, we of course know that 26TEN refers to the 26 letters of the alphabet and the 10 digits we use for counting — but is that sufficiently well known in the Tasmanian community?

Very many Tasmanians remain unaware that 26TEN is one way we can all come together – whether as individuals, organisations, government agencies or communities – to support adults to lift their literacy and numeracy.

Most significantly, there are people out there who are struggling to read, write and do basic maths, who do not know that Government-funded practical help is available now, and it is totally free of charge.

I'd like to make mention now of *26TEN Chat* – a significant element of this week's theme *Let's Talk*.

Many of you here this evening had a hand in developing, implementing and now using this practical five-step guide for talking with someone you may have noticed struggling with literacy, in order to refer them to support.

I was pleased to launch the *26TEN Chat* in February this year and, to refresh your memory, the *Chat* is a new approach to lifting skills, an approach unique in Australia that encourages and empowers anyone to refer adults to literacy and numeracy support.

The idea for the *26TEN Chat* began in the Burnie Library some years ago in response to questions from the local community and service providers. Those questions were:

*How can we refer people we know, to literacy and numeracy support?*

*How do we start this kind of conversation?*

*What is the best way to do this?*

And when 26TEN engaged with its members across the State, similar questions came up, with one in particular being:

*It's too difficult a conversation to start with someone, in case they get upset – how can I bring this up so that they don't feel bad?*

Many of you will recognise these sentiments and the need to offer a tool to help people to encourage someone they know to get help with reading, writing and maths.

With this in mind, the *26TEN Chat* five-step guide was co-designed with people from a range of sectors, community organisations and groups from across Tasmania, many represented here tonight: Libraries Tasmania; TasCOSS; the health literacy network; the Department of Education; Service Tasmania; to name a few.

It has been great to hear that *26TEN Chat* is being used in these and many other organisations.

Service Tasmania has trained staff to use the *Chat* and is distributing 30,000 postcards to clients during October.

Centrelink, The Chigwell Child and Family Centre, the Launceston Legal Centre, the Salvation Army are just some of the organisations which have trained staff; and we have had reports of people being referred.

For example, about six months ago, a coordinator at Baptcare had *The Chat* with a client and introduced him to a literacy coordinator at the Launceston Library. The client was worried and embarrassed. That client has since been working with a volunteer literacy tutor. As a quick first step he learned to use assistive technology on his phone to write messages, have Siri read his messages out loud, and check their spelling. He continues to work regularly with the tutor on improving his reading, writing and spelling skills.

I can happily advise you that this effort has given the client confidence to participate more fully at work and in his community. Most importantly, he wants to keep on learning. And that's just one example of many.

So, during this 26TEN Week, I encourage you to embrace the theme *Let's Talk* by:

- being aware of how we speak and listen every day, mindful that some people need a little longer to consider what is being said and to respond;
- talking to people about 26TEN and adult literacy;
- and using the *26TEN Chat* when we notice someone struggling with reading, writing or maths.

I am confident that after seven years 26TEN is in a sound position to help more and more Tasmanians improve their literacy and numeracy. Speed is not the be-all and end-all with a program like this one. Results are what count. And indeed we can literally count hundreds of adult Tasmanians who have benefited from 26TEN, who otherwise would still be struggling and victims of usually unintended social stigma.

Congratulations, then, on your fine work. And keep talking!

Thank you.