

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA ON THE OPENING OF “THE
BURROW”, AN INITIATIVE OF ABLE AUSTRALIA AT THE ROYAL
BOTANICAL GARDENS HOBART WEDNESDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2012.**

It is a pleasure for me to be here to officially open The Burrow, a very worthy initiative of Able Australia, supported by the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and others.

The essential purpose of the Burrow is simply to provide an escape for a while from the rigours of everyday life in this wonderful setting of the Botanical Gardens, and hopefully children and adults alike will be thereby invigorated by the concept of reading and sharing time together.

As you can see, the Burrow is a room full of donated books and records for people to come along and read, and listen – and just to add to the pleasure, the screen will continually showcase some of the best short Tasmanian films.

Users can grab a beanbag and go outside, or just enjoy the room. If they don't finish the book - take it away and there is no need to return it – the main thing is to enjoy it, and perhaps share it with family and friends.

The intention is that this place will become a community access room, designed for all to share the educational, leisure and social benefits of books and reading.

The concept of borrowing books and not having to return them, the braille wall and resources, the bean bags and the visualisation of the Burrow

itself was all created by an enthusiastic young Project team, and many congratulations go to them for that.

You will be intrigued to know that the idea for the Burrow is both international and very localised. It is based on an open air library concept from Germany; but also derived in some respects from the wonderful Reading Room installation that was created at TMAG by Hobart artist Brigita Ozolins who is here with us today.

I'm advised that local historians, local reading groups, UTAS and other entities have already expressed strong interest in utilising the Burrow, and that's a pretty good sign for Day One!

The Burrow is an excellent fit for the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, which, in addition to its management of Tasmania's botanical heritage, has a fundamental focus of involving and engaging the Tasmanian community. The RTGB plays a central role connecting the Tasmanian community through events, school programs, horticultural theory classes and outreach programs, and *in addition*, it has taken on a leading role in engaging and educating the community about gardening, nutrition and social responsibility.

Consistent with that role, the management of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens views the Burrow initiative as an excellent opportunity to provide an accessible resource to the whole community.

The project has also benefited from generous sponsorship, and thanks and public recognition are due to: Hydro Tasmania; the Braille Writers Association; Bunnings Warehouse; St Vincent De Paul; and Wide Angle Tasmania.

Above all, of course, the Burrow is the initiative of Able Australia, the disability provider employing nearly 250 Tasmanians and caring for over 160 people with disabilities.

It is important for all of us to understand that although the Burrow has been set up for Able Australia's clients, the Able model of community access ensures that all of its community projects are built for the community as a whole. Thus this room is not a disabled facility and although it has necessarily been designed to be disability friendly, it is a community room, that all can use, friendships can be made, and Able clients can share.

The prime aim of Able Australia, is to encourage the fullest participation by all groups in Tasmanian community life. The organisation owes its origins to an outbreak of rubella in 1967 that caused children to be born with multi-sensory disabilities and other disabilities. The group was known as The Deafblind Association but in 2006 the name was changed to Able Australia. Today, Able Australia Services provides a number of services for people with a range of multiple disabilities including deafblindness. Its Mission statement says it all:

“We reach out to people living with multiple disabilities, including deafblindness, supporting them in achieving self-fulfilment and connection with the greater community. We are passionate about making a difference in other people's lives, the heritage of our organisation and about the possibilities that the future holds. We believe in what we do, applying our diverse skills, commitment and expertise in communication to connect people with the wider community. We value and respect the

skills, compassion and rights of all people: the people who we work with, the people we support, and the people who generously support us.”

The Burrow is not Able Australia’s only cultural programme. It also runs one called Able Music Therapy – an issue close to my, and my wife’s heart. As I understand it, here in Tasmania Able Australia runs music-based programs for people with a range of disabilities and health issues, and through the use of music, Able Music Therapy provides a community-based service which aims to encourage communication, participation, socialisation and self-expression to enrich the lives of people with disabilities.

Although different from the Burrow in that Able Music is a fee paying programme, the therapy is delivered by music therapists who are highly skilled musicians with training in the behavioural sciences, who have completed an accredited university course in Music Therapy, and who are registered with the Australian Music Therapy Association.

The established quality and success of Able Music Therapy tells me, and I think will tell the wider community, that Able Australia’s commitment to their clients through the Burrow will be of high quality and value. It is therefore a great pleasure for me to now formally declare this wonderful initiative open.