

**EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA,
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Good evening and welcome to this reception for delegates attending the 2019 Early Childhood Australia National Conference in Hobart.

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.

It's appropriate to observe that the continuity of that culture is becoming better understood and its reinvigoration encouraged in this State by the Department of Education's impressive project 'The Orb', online resources developed to assist the teaching of Tasmanian Aboriginal history and culture for early years through to Year 12.

May I acknowledge among you:

- Chris Legg, National President;
- Ros Cornish, Tasmanian Branch President and Conference Coordinator;
- Fellow Branch Presidents;
- Conference Committee Members;

>International keynote speakers Gunilla Dalhberg and Peter Moss;

>Australian keynote speakers Sheila Degotardi, Megan Mitchell and Lester-Irabinna Rigney.

Becoming Governor of Tasmania has been a great learning experience for me about early childhood learning and its importance. My professional background is a legal academic, and in that role I taught young adults and

mature age students mainly in their 3rd, 4th and 5th years at University and supervised postgraduate students – teaching and learning at the other end of the spectrum from early childhood education.

Early in my appointment I was asked to be Chair of the Advisory Committee for the Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment. The centre is a partnership between the University of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Government and the Office of the Governor and its aim is to improve learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people through iconic projects; collaborations and research; and knowledge dissemination. As Chair of the Advisory Committee I have been given the opportunity to help progress Peter Underwood's vision of education's potential to transform lives.

The Centre recognises that engaging parents and children in their learning is key to improving educational attainment. And that this means not just school-based learning; but engaging in early learning and learning outside the classroom. Through reading and attending seminars I have learnt that studies of childhood development conclusively show the importance of communicating with children. Babies are learning language from the beginning so it is important to talk to them from birth, respond to their facial expressions, and as the Boston Basics suggest 'Talk, Sing and Point'.

The Boston Basics are five simple ways every family can give every child a great start in life. They are: maximise love, manage stress; talk, sing and point; count, group and compare; explore movement through play; and read and discuss stories. The message is that it is never too early to begin reading to your child – even babies enjoy it and benefit. The idea of the Boston Basics is to have a mass community education campaign to promote these five parenting principles, to saturate and infiltrate the community with these messages.

The Underwood Centre is collaborating with a number of other educators: Bill Jarvis, Principal of Claremont College, two teachers from Margate Primary School and Alison Stone, who has produced some helpful books for parents about early learning, to progress running a trial of Boston Basics in Tasmania. This is planned for Margate and is an exciting initiative.

As Governor, I have had the opportunity to visit many primary schools including schools in low SES areas. And talking to principals and teachers I have learnt that many children come to Kindergarten and Prep with a very limited

vocabulary and under-developed communication skills. We do have some wonderful pre-school programs such as Launch into Learning, which models playing, talking and reading to babies and toddlers. However, many of the most disadvantaged families do not engage with this program.

Through school visits and reading Lady Gowrie's 80th anniversary publication, which was launched here at Government House in June, I have also learnt about the move to more free-range play with managed risk and nature play. It was interesting to see very small children at Snug Primary School playing outside using real tools, hammers and saws.

Most of all I have gained an understanding of the importance of early childhood services and I commend your work.

Now please do enjoy the reception and feel free to take a look at our lovely State Rooms adjacent to this Drawing Room while you are here.

Thank you.