

## Launch of 26TEN Tasmania: Tasmania's Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy 2016-2025

Speech by the Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP, Minister for Education and Training  
Parliament House, 27 October 2015

26TEN Tasmania: Tasmania's Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy 2016-2025 is a long-term strategy for all Tasmania. It is a framework to enable business, community groups, Government, education and training providers, and individuals to become involved and work together to ensure all adults have the reading, writing, numeracy and communication skills they need for life and work.

The Government is committed to funding the direct provision of literacy and numeracy support to adults through LINC Tasmania and through the 26TEN grants program. And we are committed to supporting 26TEN with financial and human resources.

But Government alone cannot solve this problem. We will only achieve the ambitious goals that we have set in this strategy if we all work together and make whatever contribution that we can.

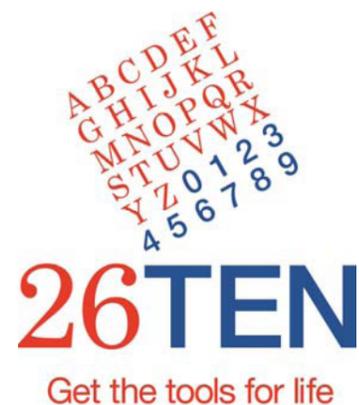
And it will be worth it for every one of us if we do.

Through more partnerships, we want to take Tasmania towards the 26TEN vision for a community where every individual reaches their full potential and makes the greatest contribution they can to our state.

A state where:

- Everyone knows about adult literacy and numeracy;
- Everyone is supported to improve their skills and to help others; and
- Everyone communicates clearly.

I endorse the strategy and I thank you for your interest and involvement.



We live in a great state, with an exciting future. It's important that all Tasmanians are provided with opportunities that enable them to be part of this exciting future.

We know from studies that almost one in two adult Tasmanians lacks the literacy skills they need to engage fully with family, community and work in today's world. This means that for almost half of us, life is harder than it needs to be. It means that Tasmania is missing out on the full contribution of its people.

Literacy and numeracy are more than being able to read, write and do maths – they mean being able to apply those skills, often in a digital context, to the demands of the modern world.

The advance of technology means the skills we need are more complex today than they were 50 years ago. We can't do much over the counter anymore. We all need to be able to do our own banking, fill in forms, go online, calculate prices, estimate time.

It doesn't matter whether you're in a desk job, raising sheep, growing salmon, fixing water pipes, building a house - all workers need sound reading, writing, maths and digital skills. We need those skills to work safely, to communicate clearly, to use workplace technology and comply with standards.

Good literacy and numeracy skills improve a person's quality of life. They make people more likely to have a job, earn a good income, be in good health and be involved with their family and community.

And they have an impact beyond the individual. Communities with higher literacy levels are more resilient and have higher per capita income. Businesses with more literate workforces are more productive. The children of parents with the skills and confidence to read to them and help them learn, perform better in school.

This Government has acted to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Tasmania's children. We have appointed more literacy and numeracy specialists in schools, we have given strong support to early literacy programs and we have started to see real results.

But we know that, in addition to having highly skilled teachers and great quality schools, children need their parents to have aspirations for them, and have the skills to help them learn beyond school, if they are to reach their full potential. We have seen again and again, through the LINC Tasmania Literacy Network, that adults who have struggled in the past say being able to help and inspire their children is one of the most meaningful benefits they get from improving their own skills.

So making a difference for Tasmanian adults now, for the people who are no longer in our schools, has to be part of our work to lift educational outcomes in this state.

Tasmania recognised this five years ago, and began doing something about it through the Adult Literacy Action Plan 2010-2015. That plan, and Tasmania's commitment to raise adult literacy levels, had tri-partisan support. I was pleased to reconfirm this Government's support to the plan when I became Minister of Education in 2014, and to oversee some of its achievements.

The 26TEN plan to date has:

- Established a state-wide network of adult literacy coordinators in LINC Tasmania sites, Community Corrections and Risdon Prison;
- Recruited and trained volunteer adult literacy tutors

26TEN, representing the 26 letters of the alphabet and the ten digits we use for counting, has become a way we can talk about adult literacy and numeracy without stigma.

Since its launch in October 2012, 26TEN has raised awareness of the adult literacy challenge in our state and helped individuals and organisations take action. And it has raised awareness of the importance of communicating clearly, in plain English.

26TEN has delivered literacy awareness and plain English workshops to organisations and communities across the state. It has provided information through its website, Facebook page and telephone hotline.

Through the 26TEN grants program, 26TEN has supported close to eighty employers and community organisations. These grants have helped improve the literacy of employees and community members and make workplaces more accessible for people who need to improve their skills.

I recently awarded more than \$500 000 in 26TEN employer grants to a further eleven organisations across Tasmania.

Grant recipients have been as diverse as Southern Water (now TasWater) – who will tell us in a moment about their project to build the literacy skills of 86 field workers – and the Circular Head Council to support the development of their inspirational Community Literacy Plan.

Since 2010, over 7 000 Tasmanian adults have received support to improve their literacy and numeracy through the 26TEN grants program and the LINC Tasmania literacy network, and over 100 organisations and businesses have taken action to improve adult literacy in many different ways.

Tasmania is leading the nation by taking action on this issue, and our efforts have been recognised nationally.

Now, we want to take the next step. And today I am proud to launch 26TEN Tasmania: Tasmania's Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy 2016-2025 and, to support and drive the strategy, a brand new website and an expanded 26TEN Coalition.

The 26TEN Coalition is a committed group of people who volunteer their time to champion the cause of adult literacy and numeracy and advocate for action in their respective sectors. Today, I'm pleased to appoint six new members to join the existing four – Siobhan Gaskell, Mary Bent, Royce Fairbrother and Jo Crothers – who have given so much to 26TEN over the past three years.

The new members of the 26TEN Coalition are: Tanya Denison, Mellissa Gray, Angela Ross, Tim Tierney, Malcolm Wells and Daryl Quilliam, who will take on the role of Chair.

These new appointments give the Coalition a broader reach across a range of key sectors, including: health, law, building, construction and civil engineering, state and local government, media and community.

We are making 26TEN a vehicle to enable truly genuine collaborative partnerships. Partnerships of the sort in evidence in Launceston today, where 26TEN, the Department of Health and Human Services – Public Health Services, Primary Health Tasmania, the Tasmanian Health Service and UTAS and other key health sector professionals are gathered together at the Becoming a Health Literate Tasmania forum to discuss the importance to public health outcomes of clear communication and improved literacy.

I welcome all members of the Coalition here today. I also welcome representatives of our 26TEN member organisations, 26TEN supporters, LINC Tasmania Literacy Coordinators, volunteer tutors and the motivated Tasmanians who have come forward to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Every one of you is a key player in the collective effort we need to lift our state.