



TOAST FOR KIDS CHARITY INC.

PATRONS: Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania and Emeritus Professor Don Chambers, AO

Lifting literacy Community Consultation – Have Your Say

Submission by Toast for Kids Charity Inc.

Toast for Kids Charity Inc. (T4K) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation and in assisting to improve literacy in Tasmania.

T4K evolved from the awareness of Devonport being the 7th most disadvantage community in Tasmania (SEIFA 2011), exploring possibilities to combat disadvantage, and in adopting the aim to “Break the cycle of poverty, poor health, social exclusion, and helplessness through and by supporting emergency food relief, food security and education.”

With poverty seen as the most common cause of food insecurity, education is seen as one of the most important factors in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty. T4K recognised education as a key component to a child’s future; a cornerstone for community growth and success; and that reading was the cornerstone of learning.

- For the past ten years our charity gala has raised funds to help support local school breakfast clubs in providing nutritional meals for primary and high school students, partnering with Devonport Chaplaincy and Loaves and Fishes. Funds raised have provided over 170,000 meals.
- For the past 5 years T4K has conducted the Devonport Readers Cup a primary school reading competition, encouraging all children – not just ‘good readers’ – to read, and to enjoy what they read. It is also a way to reward enthusiastic readers in the context of a team activity.
 - 10-12 local Devonport, Latrobe & Kentish primary schools compete annually
- HELP BABIES LEARN Project (HBL) commenced in 2020, creating of a pure bred Tasmanian children’s book aimed at encouraging parents of newborn babies to read aloud to their child every day from day one of their lives, introducing sound, language, expression, colours and letters, investing in their future.
 - “Tassie Rhymes for little tiger” by Narelda Joy was published August 2022
 - Authored, illustrated, designed and printed in Tasmania
 - Features Tasmanian fauna
 - Lists their palawa kani names with phonics
 - Has a counting game
 - The book is free to Tasmanian parents of Tasmanian newborn babies
 - A braille/low vision companion version has also been published for parents (and children) who experience vision impairment
 - T4K’s publishing of a children’s book with a braille/low vision companion version is a first for Australia. (Sonali Marathe, NextSense – formerly the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children)

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- NextSense is promoting joint versions as an example of best practise for inclusion.
- The project is supported by the Tasmanian Community Fund, Tasmanian Branch Children's Book Council of Australia, Harcourts Foundation, Bendigo Bank, TASFREIGHT, Apex Club of Ulverstone, Tasmanian Broadcasting, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and Child & Family Learning Centres statewide.

It is well documented Tasmania has the lowest levels of literacy in Australia, with more than half of the state's population having inadequate reading and writing skills. Tasmania also has the highest rate of poverty in Australia and although there has been policy changes, along with the introduction of various programs, respectfully, no sustained improvement in educational outcomes have been recently evident.

Literacy, population wide, has the ability to combat disadvantage and poverty, as well as, build a strong foundation for better paid jobs, economic and social advancements.

The HELP BABIES LEARN Project continues to promote reading aloud every day to your child from the first days of their lives day one along with the associated benefits. The project looks to create/inspire/strengthen a culture of reading aloud, something T4K sees as having been missing for a long time.

The effort to create/inspire/strengthen a culture of reading aloud has been linked with agencies at the coalface – Child & Family Learning Centres and Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania, attempting to reach parents with low literacy skills and provide a free resource that would ignite an interest to read to their child/ren and, provide a sense of place, belonging and pride. The links are purposeful as the agencies also provide additional support, referrals and programs should they be requested or needed.

It is T4K's belief that there should a consistent and continuous message from all agencies involved with literacy in Tasmania, including the three tiers of government, suggesting that message revolve around: -

READ ALOUD TO YOUR CHILD EVERY DAY, STARTING FROM THE FIRST DAYS OF THEIR LIVES.

Simply providing a book is not the solution, it is the beginning.

We hope that there is something of value for you to consider and perhaps effect and offer our further input and assistance.

Sincerely,
Steve Martin
President, Toast for Kids

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