

**Paint the Town REaD Ltd**

**7<sup>th</sup> National Early Learning Conference**

**Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC  
Governor of Western Australia**

**Thursday, 21 March 2019**

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Wadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Let me first commence by reading a message on the Paint Australia REaD Book Relay, from Her Excellency Lady Cosgrove, Patron of Paint the Town REaD:

*“The world of reading, with all of its stories of imagination, adventure and fantasy, is such an important and wonderful part of childhood.*

*This book relay across Australia encourages a love of books among our children and reminds us of the importance of reading to them.*

*Reading is the first step in learning and something we can all enjoy and share together, today and every day.*

*Let’s paint Australia REaD!”*

I would like to commend Her Excellency Lady Cosgrove and the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) for serving as vice-regal patrons for Paint the Town REaD, along with a large list of patronages across diverse sectors such as health, children and families, Indigenous people, regional Australia, education, the arts, defence and services.

Paint the Town REaD (PTTR) has identified that,

*“...more than 20% of Australian children arrive at school without the skills necessary to make the most of their early education.”*

In their work, motivating and building the capacity of communities, PTTR contribute to lessening this statistic and ensuring that children are provided with the skills necessary to be ready to read and write in school.

From its initial development in the 1990s in the New South Wales town of Parkes where PTTR founder Ms Rhonda Brain OAM was once principal of Parkes Public School, the outstanding work of Paint the Town REaD can now be seen in over 80 communities, across four states in Australia. And is only continuing to grow.

14 PTTR sites are located across regional and metropolitan Western Australia.

I understand that Onslow, located in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, was the first remote community site established by the PTTR.

I congratulate PTTR Founder Ms Rhonda Brain OAM, Executive Director Barbie Bates, and the broader Paint the Town REaD group on the great work they are doing to foster and promote a literacy culture in community groups, agencies and businesses across Australia.

The success of PTTR is testament to Rhonda Brain's vision, hard work and commitment to promoting the importance of early childhood development.

I am also encouraged by the contributions of Barbie Bates establishing the multicultural and Aboriginal models of PTTR.

When I consider the theme of this year's conference, *Books and Bonding Builds Brains – it's what the Doctor orders* I am reminded of how critical the first 1,000 days of a child's life are for brain development and function.

Early childhood literacy can play a central role in ensuring that children are provided with core literacy skills which will aid in their success in school.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to officially open the 7<sup>th</sup> National Early Learning Conference here in Fremantle.

I congratulate all those who are participating in the Paint Australia REaD Book Relay, celebrating the importance of early literacy.

I look forward to hearing stories of the relay which will travel from here, across the country and conclude in Wollongong NSW on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.