

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE EASTWOOD EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE
EAST TOOWOOMBA
8 AUGUST 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, I acknowledge the traditional keepers of this land and those who have built and prepared this space for the infants and children of the Toowoomba community.

Friends, I'm really delighted to join you here this afternoon for this important occasion in the life of Eastwood Early Education.

Indeed, it's wonderful to have the opportunity to see Toowoomba again - it's been a while since my last visit.

I've just come from opening your Languages and Cultures Festival in Queens Park. What a marvellous mirror and celebration of the diversity of local life here.

A fine example of:

community building and citizenship

tolerance, understanding and appreciation of differences between people

and leadership in fostering inclusiveness, social cohesion and harmony.

All the things that young children begin to explore every day as they play and learn alongside one another in their schools and early learning centres.

I am so fortunate in this role to spend time at the heart of communities, to feel their energy and humanity, and to observe their special strength and unity.

There are certain places in a community that are a steady gauge of these qualities.

This centre will be, and ought to be, one of them.

Where compassion, emotional intelligence and the highest standards of expertise are central to your ethos and practice.

Some 15 years ago I was Chair and CEO of the National Childcare Accreditation Council.

Groundbreaking work was being done in small rural centres with limited financial resources and the finest of professionals.

I learnt about excellence in early childhood education and care.

And I learnt about the importance of having mentors in our working lives, and the affirming power of collaboration.

These principles and standards sustain and guide us always.

Your founder, director and mastermind, Ms Katy Mason has, at a young age, seen their intrinsic value too:

her father, Dr Bernie Mason - a guide, mentor, friend and adviser

her staff - the backbone of her dream and vital members of her collegial network

which she continues to extend as she undertakes her doctoral studies in early childhood, builds on her industry advocacy role, and keeps on being a mum to Zara!

Katy and your team, the demands on you are high.

It is well documented that:

the changing shape of families

of women's role in society,

and the greater economic need for women to participate in paid work,

have meant that child care has become one of the biggest issues for Australian families and social policy makers.

You are important contributors to public debate and community action.

And, as families face the mounting pressures of modern life, and in too many cases,

the additional challenges of inadequate income,

limited language skills,

physical and mental illness, and disability,

you are a critical link in the circle of care.

Katy, I give you my greatest encouragement in your journey and enterprise, and I express my greatest admiration and praise for:

your initiative, commitment and intellect,

your respect for the ability and worth of every child,

and your contribution to their wellbeing.

It is now my most sincere pleasure to officially open the doors of the Eastwood Early Education Centre.