

**connecting:**  
**the heart of literacy report**



**connect42**

**#100PercentLiteracy**

## foreword by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor of Tasmania



It was a great pleasure for me as Patron of [connect42](#) to host the second [Connecting: the Heart of Literacy](#) symposium building on the first held in 2018, with this second symposium pressing after the widely embraced goal of the first - 100% literacy.

The symposium's purpose was to pursue this goal with dialogue with a somewhat different but equally if not more diverse group of participants than the original 2018 event. The day began with a poem recited by a day release prisoner which conveyed her grief and yearning for her children. This was followed by a short video telling the story of Matt and Brad who had finished school without learning to read. It was an awakening to the privilege which tends to numb us to the obstacles that confront so many.

And it gave a human face to the 48% functional illiteracy statistic.

On both occasions, the format encouraged respectful dialogue, not argument or persuasion but listening and reflection; wondering and inquiry rather than challenge or interrogation. In our busy days we do not always take the time to reflect, to listen carefully and to be challenged to let go of our own agenda, to think laterally and to allow ideas and collaborations to emerge.

Despite good economic growth in Tasmania, with so many societal issues confronting us, it is easy to feel despondent and helpless – the poor literacy rate, 120,000 living in poverty, high youth unemployment, the poorest dental health in Australia, the highest obesity rates, homelessness and a shortage of affordable housing, climate change, refugees and so on.

The positive vibe of the day made me remember, to quote Edward Everett Hale, that:

*“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.”*

I am sure the day inspired others to feel this encouragement. That we all have the power to influence in whatever small way; that we have an opportunity to do something positive and collaboratively. The literacy deficit of so many in Tasmania and Australia is indeed a wicked problem but in the words of Leunig, which Rosie quoted to encourage us all, ‘We must keep keeping on’. And she would add ‘calmly and kindly’.

## overview

On 11th September 2019 [connect42](#) (formerly Chatter Matters Tasmania) convened [Connecting: The Heart of Literacy](#), a symposium hosted by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor of Tasmania.

The purpose of the day was to bring a diverse group together in reflective dialogue about action to better understand how to achieve our aspirational goal of 100% literacy for all Tasmanians.

## place

This second Heart of Literacy symposium was again hosted by Her Excellency at Tasmania's beautiful vice regal home. The loveliness and grace of this historic place mirrored the symposium's purposes – for a beautiful and open space in which the participants could reflect, and think deeply about 100% literacy.

It has been fantastic to hold these symposia at Government House, noting in particular the symbolism of events about equity for all Tasmanians taking place in a building borne of colonialism, standing on muwinina land. As Her Excellency has written,

*“It also seems to me that Government House, as an establishment that is representative of all Tasmanians irrespective of background, education or status in the community, is an ideal location to undertake a collaborative problem-solving event of this nature.”<sup>1</sup>*

## people

A diverse group of Tasmanians brought their hearts and minds together to share story and perspectives about 'Connecting' and 'Literacy'. Participants included Her Excellency, adult learners of literacy, a prisoner on day release, educators, researchers, representatives from industry, media, small to medium enterprises, for-purpose organisations, support groups and the university; also leaders within the public agencies, private consultants, parents of children with literacy challenges and students.

Attendees were invited with a view to ensuring diversity in the group and according to their capacity to participate for the full day and evening of the event. Approximately 20% of participants had also attended the first Heart of Literacy symposium in November 2018. This overlap in the guest list was intentional in order to positively influence the second group, from the outset, with the culture established in the first – a culture of safety, trust, connectedness and creativity.<sup>2</sup>

In their lives, stories, and experiences, all of the attendees are people in positions of influence – though not all may think of themselves in this way. Gathered to discuss our shared and differing views on 100% literacy for all Tasmanians, participants were encouraged to share and listen in safety, allowing the perspectives and spheres of influence around our literacy opportunity to be enlarged.

In the words of William Stafford:

*“If you don’t know the kind of person I am, and I don’t know the kind of person you are, a pattern that others made may prevail in the world”*

The group, gathered from across Tasmania, had opportunity to reflect on the pattern they could cause to prevail in their worlds, our State, by knowing the kind of persons we each are.

## purpose

The purpose of the [Connecting: The Heart of Literacy](#) reflective-dialogue symposium was to take the 100% literacy mandate arising from the November 2018 [Communicating: The Heart of Literacy](#) symposium and generate insights for connected and collaborative actions to achieve it. After the first symposium, Her Excellency wrote:

*“It was truly inspiring. At the end of the day we were at one: unlocking every child’s potential to learn the magic of reading is an achievable goal...”<sup>3</sup>*

In September 2019, the deliberations of the [Connecting: The Heart of Literacy](#) symposium began at the 100% literacy mandate.

The aims of the second symposium were to continue contributing to the multiple conversations and paradigm shifts that are needed as part of the many efforts to make positive impact upon Tasmania’s literacy and equity status. And to particularly generate and deliberate on the many positive action steps in which we might all be agents – individually and through collaboration.

## the problem is an opportunity

Australia has a high rate of functional illiteracy, 44%, and Tasmania shares this national emergency. Work toward the resolution of this inequity is important and urgent for the nation’s economic and social future.

For Tasmania this problem is now an opportunity. Tasmanians are aware and have indicated their willingness for no less than 100% literacy. Our Education Minister, the Honorable Jeremy Rockliff, has courageously stated his alignment with this target. In pursuing 100% literacy, Tasmania is poised to garner and share the full fruits of 100% of its people, and to show the world how a small and connected State can care for its own - and share with the rest.

Following the insights gained at the first symposium, Her Excellency wrote:

*“... unlocking every child’s potential to learn the magic of reading is an achievable goal and here, in our island State, we have people with the passion, skill, drive and insights to realise this dream.”<sup>4</sup>*

## process

**Connecting: The Heart of Literacy** began with warm welcomes from palawa woman, Janice Ross, and from Her Excellency. A moment was taken to launch the former Chatter Matters into its new identity as **connect42**. In this new name we elevate the meaning which connection brings to our lives, our place in the world on our beautiful island here at 42° South, and hope – because in Aski code, 42 is the wild card with which anything might happen and all things are possible! We reminded ourselves that we finished the November 2018 symposium with the quaint wisdom in Michael Leunig’s poem and cartoon ‘How To Get There’. We are on a journey to 100% literacy and we must ‘just keep on with it’.



We sought to broaden and strengthen the understanding that literacy emerges from the security and language that grow within connected, tender relationships between parents and children. This understanding is the bedrock of the road to 100% literacy for Tasmania.

We were privileged to hear poetry written and presented by a young mother on day release from prison. Brook wrote about her love for her children and her pain in being separated from them. We viewed the video stories of Brad & Matt, young men in their 20s and 30s respectively. They told of their lives without literacy and the negative impact on their esteem and opportunities. And they told of their enlivened hope upon receiving targeted help.



Holding these ‘centre of the storm’ stories in mind, we were invited into personal writing or drawing to connect our ‘e-motions’, borne of listening to these stories of others, to the ‘motions’ we can make to ‘get there’. The group was then invited to envision 100% literacy in Tasmania. What would Tasmania, its society and its people, be like with 100% literacy. Drawing on Michael Leunig’s gentle wisdom once more, we were invited to let it all unravel to become the path on which we travel.

With provocation of Danaan Parry’s ‘The Parable of the Trapeze’ the members of the gathered group were individually challenged to reflect upon the courage they bring for change and risk, and for the beauty of soaring adventure. They were invited to connect these reflections to the vision and journey to 100% literacy. Then, having paid attention to these deep, personally-informing realisations, they were invited, in the simple words of poet Mary Oliver to ‘tell about it’.

*“Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.” Mary Oliver*

In randomly-formed triads, the group had opportunity to share story, listen deeply to two others, connect in trust, and link all of this to the personal courage and necessary action to attain the envisioned Tasmania with 100% literacy.

After lunch attendees chose to participate in one of four dialogue groups. These groups were designed to draw upon the wisdom and diverse knowledge and experiences of the participants, and to generate actions to contribute to 'getting there'. Each group had a theme under which the dialogue took place:



LITERACY &  
RESEARCH



LITERACY &  
JUSTICE



LITERACY &  
LEARNING



LITERACY &  
BUSINESS

Participants were invited to reflect on three questions in relation to the theme of their chosen group. These were:



WHAT HAVE WE ASSUMED ABOUT  
LITERACY AND WHERE MIGHT WE  
BE WRONG?



WHAT DOES 100 PERCENT LOOK  
LIKE IN THIS THEME AREA?



HOW MIGHT WE GET THERE?

Attendees were encouraged to listen to the contributions of others. They were encouraged to notice their own reactions to the things that others said. Rather than responding in a back-and-forth 'debate' style of interaction, all were encouraged to turn to wonder and ask themselves questions about their own reactions to the contributions of others. This was done to encourage deeper listening, greater opportunity to learn from differing views, and to maintain a safe space of respect and care for each other as we shared our thoughts from within and across our differences. Posters and post-it notes proliferated as scribes captured the conversations.

Finally, participants were invited to view the work of the other groups. They engaged in personal writing/drawing on the linkages between the ideas for action that were generated in the four themes. They then wrote about or verbally shared further thoughts, ideas, noticed connections, and/or commitments to next steps. The day closed with gratitude and the pleasure of lingering connection over an informal supper.

## landing place

A clear landing place was the trust and good will for action, change and collaboration. As with the November 2018 session, many collaborative conversations and plans emerged simply from bringing people with shared passions and differing areas of expertise together to connect with purpose.

The landing place for an envisioned Tasmania with 100% literacy was astounding. Participants told of a Tasmania that was kind, connected, flourishing, generous, confident, inclusive, safe and with less crime; they told of improved health and wellbeing, and increased hope, positivity, intellectual capital and much more. Few attendees wrote of structures and utilitarian outcomes. They overwhelmingly wrote about the burgeoning of positive qualities of character and positive relationships amongst Tasmanians and with others beyond our shores.

We also landed with an array of action steps. It is our wish to share this information and set it free for use amongst the attendees and anyone reading this report. We are confident that for the attendees, impetus to action will arise from being part of the generation of this material on the day; and then from taking a changed self away from the day and back into the to-ing and fro-ing of life and role.

## the tangible and measurable actions that connect42 will collaborate to support:

Launching a pilot project in a primary school to bring specialist direct-instruction in the sub-skills of literacy. It will do this through expanded collaboration between speech pathologists and educators with focus on oral language, phonemic awareness and secure attachment. [Connect42](#) sees this action as a direct alignment with the current Department of Education Literacy Framework.





## follow up and support actions generated in the dialogues:

### literacy and learning



### literacy and justice

Define	Better define 'justice literacy' in terms of the language and communication needs required to understand the 'system' and 'rights'.
Create	Create universally accessible information for people entering, living in and exiting the criminal justice system. This includes a 'landing card/toolkit/ app' with digital, audio and easy English information.
Invest in	Invest in a key worker for all entering, living in and exiting the criminal justice system- one who can connect them to literacy support and to assist with social needs.

## literacy and business



Rethink the metric of literacy for business



Deep wrap-around support for 0-3 education



Raise awareness of holistic economics of literacy



Engage communities of interest to support lobbying government



Educate on what literacy is and enlarge the campaign for #100PercentLiteracy.



Host further dialogue events focused on development of projects and personal (en)courage(ment).

## literacy and research

Engaging with people we want to help – including those for whom English is their additional language

Research that reaches far and wide – not only negatives

Conversations about the good things happening in schools

Research, evaluation and collection of stories from teachers

Impacts of poor literacy on the Tasmanian economy

Research into what other countries are doing (eg: Cuba, Finland)

Stories of schools doing 'wonder things' in terms of literacy

Single case study design

Qualitative + Quantitative research

Putting literacy at the centre of everything

Researching the undercurrents undermining literacy

## how we will work with you to get there

connect42 is eager to remain connected with all participants; and insofar as we can, to facilitate and support connection, collaboration and partnerships in the emergent projects, pilot programs and other actions related to improving the literacy levels of Tasmanians.

We are eager to support intrapersonal and interpersonal courage amongst all who seek the 100% literacy horizon. As Michael Leunig reminds us, we need to 'sit down and have a rest every now and again'. We can help each other as importantly in calm, kind and generous rest and reflection, as we can in calm, kind and generous work.

Connection and dialogue are restful. They build courage. Connection and dialogue are also productive. They build the change we wish to see prevail in the world. It is valuable here to give some thought to the notion of action bias and how it can distort meaningful approaches to complex problems. Action bias is a default reaction for many people to many situations where the desire is to fix a problem, to make the pain go away. In working with the complexity found in reaching for 100% literacy, we need to address the problem in the mode of Einstein, spending 95 percent of our time with the problem, rather than rushing toward a solution.

The length and age of the systemic issue of low literacy indicates it is not easily or quickly solved, and thus myriad small, thoughtful approaches can be tried, refined, failed, considered, embraced, evolved, and all pointed at 100% literacy. This approach is the underpinning of the reflective dialogue, choosing time and space for solutions to collectively emerge.

**Thank you to Her Excellency and her teams at Government House. Thank you to all who attended. As we continue, courage can guide our hands, and hope, our will.**



**#100PercentLiteracy**

## appendix 1: participants

**Amanda Ducker**  
Mercury Associate Editor

**Amanda Neil**  
Health Economist, Menzies

**Amelia Jones**  
Square Pegs

**Brook**  
Poet

**Cedric Mannen**  
CEO Family Planning

**Chris Rayner**  
Academic, School of Education, Utas

**Chrissy Gamble**  
Education Consultant, Independent Schools  
Tasmania

**Clarissa Adriel**  
Program manager - Migrant Resource Centre

**Clive Tilsley**  
Fuller's Bookshop, Business

**Danielle le Rossignol**  
Manager Professional Services, DoE

**David Gutteridge**  
Manager Literacy Services, Libraries Tasmania

**Debra Hutton**  
Principal Project Officer - Literacy, DoE

**Emma Sells**  
Accountant, Connect42 board

**Gail Eaton-Briggs**  
Strategic consultant

**Geoff Fader**  
Chair, Tasmanian Small Business Council

**Gina Loewen**  
Children's development & aspiration

**Ian Thomas**  
Director of Tasmania Prison Service

**Isabelle Bartkowiak-Theron**  
Tas Institute Law Enforcement Studies - Utas

**Jane Morrison**  
Teacher leadership, Friends' School

**Janice Ross**  
Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer,  
Riawunna

**Jess Robbins**  
Tasmanian Way

**Jessi Mostogl**  
Education consultant-NORTH

**Jim Burden**  
Manager employee Relations, Tas Water

**Jim McCormack**  
Mojo Works, Education Consultant

**Jo Clark**  
Principal, St Paul's Catholic School

**Jo Dickinson**  
Researcher, Menzies

**Johanna Haestrup**  
Intern, Tas Institute of Law Enforcement Studies

**Kate Barnett**  
Speech pathologist, DoE, North

**Kate Harrison CEO**  
Reading Tasmania

**Kate Polglase**  
Lawyer - Dept Communities

**Kate Warner**  
Her Excellency, Governor of Tasmania

**Kerry Howells**  
Academic, Education, Utas

**Kitty te Riele**  
Academic, Peter Underwood Centre

**Kristen Desmond**  
Disability in Education Advocacy

**Leanne Minshull**  
Director, Tasmania Australia Institute

**Linda McKillop**  
Speech pathologist, private practice

**Lindsey Fidler**  
Acting Manger Social Action Research Centre

**Lisa Johnson**  
Speech pathologist, private practice

**Lola Cowle**  
EO, Tasmania Community Fund

**Loveth Ochayi**  
Economics student, Connect42 admin assistant

**Lyn Goldberg**  
Researcher, Wicking

**Maree Thompson**  
Teacher, School-based leadership, DoE

**Mathew Healey**  
Executive Director, Dept Communities

**Michael Rowan**  
Professor Education, Utas, Education Ambassadors

**Nick Evans**  
Dep Sec Corrections

**Nova Miller**  
EO, Connect42

**Polly McGee**  
Author, Digital Strategist, Facilitator, Connect42 board

**Rich Martin**  
Business, volunteer, Connect42 board

**Rikki Mawad**  
Consultant, lawyer, facilitator, Connect42 board

**Rob Tanti**  
Chief People Officer, Hydro Tasmania

**Roberta Julian**  
Director, Tasmania Institute of Law Enforcement Studies

**Robin Banks**  
Connect42 Chair, lawyer, PhD candidate

**Rosie Martin**  
Speech pathologist, criminologist, facilitator, Connect42

**Sally Giacon**  
Early intervention leader, DoE

**Sally Hill**  
Consultant

**Sarah Bolt**  
Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

**Steve Bentley**  
Child trauma specialist, teacher

**Susan Miles**  
Senior teacher, DoE

**Tess Egan**  
Librarian - AAD

**Todd Babiak**  
CEO, Brand Tasmania

**Tracy Zhou**  
Accountant, Connect42 board

**Tyson Montgomery**  
Reader

**Uria Afamasaga**  
Small business owner

**Wendy Quinn**  
Leadership academic, Utas

## appendix 2: objectives

The objectives of [Connecting: The Heart of Literacy](#) were:

- i. To gather a diverse and broadened cohort of participants – consumers, leaders, service providers, influencers, commentators – to build on the work of the 2018 symposium.
- ii. To increase understanding of the value of cross-agency and cross-sector integration and collaboration for building the skills of communication, language and literacy in all citizens.
- iii. To understand the efficacy of communication skills from multiple points of view and diversity of experience – through shared story and intentional dialogue.
- iv. To enhance participants’ experiences and skills in collaborating with others from diverse perspectives, and cultural and work backgrounds.
- v. To expand participants’ empathy and strengthen their connections through diversity.
- vi. To provide participants with opportunity for safe, guided reflection upon their individual experiences of collaboration, dialogue and the skills that these require.
- vii. To provide participants with opportunity for safe guided reflection upon their barriers to collaboration and to link their arising insights to the topics of connection and literacy.
- viii. To provide participants with opportunity to take part in intentional dialogues; and to practice and observe these skills in self and others.
- ix. To provide participants with tools to develop relational trust and leadership within their organisations; and beyond their workplaces into their personal lives as family members and contributing citizens.
- x. To harvest and share the fruits of this intentional connection and conversation with a wider audience: this will include government, university, public service agencies, community organisations, schools, and the general public.
- xi. To continue to build a cross-agency and multi-disciplinary community of reflective practice to build on the work of both symposia.
- xii. To add to the reach and power of the campaign for #100PercentLiteracy.

<sup>1</sup> From the foreword that Her Excellency wrote for the 2018 Communicating: The Heart of Literacy collection of opinion pieces.

<sup>2</sup> A full list of participants is available at appendix 1

<sup>3</sup> From Communicating; The Heart of Literacy Report