

## Opening of Child Parent Centre at East Maddington Primary School – 1 Dec 2015

*Speech delivered by Centrecare Director - Mr Tony Pietropiccolo AM*



Good morning everyone.

I offer my sincere respects to the traditional owners of this land both past and present.

May I acknowledge:

- Hon. Tony Simpson, Minister for Local Government; Community Services; Seniors and Volunteering; Youth;
- Mr Colin Campbell representing Minister Helen Morton, Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection and Family Support.
- Cr Olwen Searle, Mayor, City of Gosnells
- Ms Margaret Collins, Regional Executive Director –South Metropolitan Education region.
- Ms Anne Burns, Chairperson of Centrecare's Board.

I'll begin by telling you a little about Centrecare. Our organisation provides over 70 social service programs. Its 300 staff work from 11 different centres and provide services across large tracts of WA. We offer family support, relationship and youth services. We assist separating families, people with gambling problems, and children, women and men caught in the destructive cycle of family violence. Our workers provide out of home care for Aboriginal children, return former prisoners to their communities and provide other essential services to places as far away as Warburton and beyond.

As the Minister has mentioned, Centrecare has been delivering social services in WA for the past 70 years. We have made major commitments to the south east region of Perth for many years now with offices in Cannington and Gosnells. Our workers have shared in the joys and difficulties of the people of this region for a long time. We have participated in the struggle that many families have had and continue to have as they attempt to find a way through the pressures of daily life.

We are delighted to be involved with the Child Parent Centres at East Maddington and Gosnells. The Centres' focus on the wellbeing of children and the importance of their early years are principles that Centrecare strongly believes in. Through our work, we have seen too often the distress that is caused by a poor start to a child's life and the ongoing difficulties that ensue through their teenage years and adulthood as a consequence of it.

Children need to have a special place in our considerations. They cannot simply be seen as future sources of labour, a cost to society or a frustrating impediment to the fulfilment of our adult desires. Like most human beings they can be frustrating and difficult to deal with at times. Despite this, children are special because they inspire us to be in the moment, to focus on the importance of shared time and the beauty of simplicity. Their ability to cut through to the essence of things, to find delight in the smallest of pleasures and to express love in the cutest of ways makes them very precious as they remind us of the truly important things in life.

Centrecare in collaboration with Parkerville has embarked on a project that seeks to highlight the value of children. Our "Valuing Children" initiative is intended to bring children to the forefront of adult considerations. The vision for this project is to assist our community to

enhance its responsiveness to children and to help create a greater, shared responsibility for all children not just our own. (You'll hear more about this initiative in the months ahead.)



The commitment that has been shown by the Federal, State and Local governments to children and to the importance of the early years is heartening. Like any commitment if it is to truly achieve its intended purpose it needs to be sustainable in the long term. The practical expression of this commitment is the State government's creation of the Child Parent Centres and the significant investment made in them. The Centres are intended to be a source of support, encouragement and community connection for parents and their children. Places in which both children and adults can come together to learn from and enjoy each other. It is a place - to learn - to grow - to yarn - to share - to connect - to be and to belong.

Throughout the establishment of this Centre it has been a pleasure to work with the Department of Education especially the team at the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning. East Maddington Primary School, and the surrounding primary schools of Bramfield Park, East Kenwick, Orange Grove and Maddington have all been very welcoming and helpful. Centrecare is highly appreciative of the support provided to us by the principals of these school, especially Carolyn Lucarelli from our host school. We look forward to a long and successful association with you all.

Centrecare is committed to making the Child Parent Centres as effective as they can be. We know that this effectiveness can only be realised if we remain open to a genuine collaboration with children, parents, school, local community, and other service providers wether government or non-government. Centrecare wants to acknowledge the cooperation it has received from the City of Gosnells and other service organisations in this region. The ongoing partnerships between the State Departments of Local Government and Communities, Health, Child Protection and Family Support and Education will greatly assist the Centre to achieve its aims.

Attaining better outcomes for community wellbeing will never be the result of competition between entities. It can only be achieved through the articulation and accomplishment of common goals; goals that inspire us to move beyond individual logos to a broader conception of society; ones that unite us in a common purpose. Parent Child Centres provide us with such an opportunity and our joint efforts can ensure that we maximise on their potential.

Centrecare's Tresna Gale, the Coordinator of the Centre, has been working with the local community for the last 18 months. Parents and families have already had the opportunity to engage and participate in the services and programs provided at and through the Child Parent Centre.

She tells me that she has enjoyed the work immensely and her enthusiasm is still very evident. My thanks to her and to Leanne Strommen, our Executive Manager for this region, for their hard work with the local community and the schools concerned. Our thanks to the Local Advisory Committee members for their assistance. We are encouraged by the fact that they will continue to guide and support the future work of the Child Parent Centre.

Today is a special day as it is the official opening of this inviting and beautifully conceived building. It also, of course, confirms the presence of a Child Parent Centre at the heart of the local community. This is something well worth celebrating as this initiative creates wonderful opportunities for our community, especially its children.