



Opening of Child Parent Centre at East Maddington Primary School

Good morning everyone.

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

May I acknowledge:

- Hon. Peter Collier, MLC Minister for Education, Aboriginal Affairs and Electoral Affairs.
- Hon. John Day, MLA, Minister for Planning.
- Cr Olwen Searle, Mayor, City of Gosnells
- other distinguished guests

Some of you already know a little about Centrecare and its work, I'll say something about our organisation for those of you who may not.

Our organisation has been providing services to the West Australian community since the 1940s. From very small beginnings as a welcoming service to refugees from the Second World War it is now an organisation with 300 staff and 11 locations both in the metropolitan area and in regional centres.

Its services are extensive with 70 different programs; services that assist people with relationship difficulties, homelessness, gambling addictions, mental health issues and family violence. Centrecare staff assist partners to deal with separation difficulties, provide Aboriginal children with out of home care, support families in need, assist ex-prisoners with housing and return others to their communities whether in the Goldfields region or as far away as the South Australian border. New arrivals to Australia find assistance with immigration matters, parents receive support and advice with their very young and adolescents and their parents obtain counselling and other supports as they deal with daily life.

Centrecare is delighted to be involved with the Child Parent Centres based at East Maddington and Gosnells primary schools. Our organisation has been delivering services in the South East corridor of the metropolitan area for over 30 years. Our housing and family support programs have been mainly based in this region for just as long. Centrecare's affordable housing company, Stellar Living, is based in Maddington directly as a result of the significant number of houses it manages in this area. One of Centrecare's major offices, with a complement of over 50 staff, is based here. So, we have a long-term commitment to the people of Gosnells and its surrounding suburbs. Centrecare's involvement with the Child Parent Centres further enhances its ability to assist local families and to achieve greater integration of services; something that is essential if we are to effectively impact on social needs. Needs that we are well aware of given the many thousands of families and individuals we have assisted over the years.

Child Parent Centres are a positive sign that our society is increasingly aware of the importance of a safe and happy childhood. The research evidence is overwhelming in demonstrating that the experiences of early childhood often shape a person's life. In our work we often see the reality of this as individuals struggle to overcome deficits that were set



in train in their early years. Their struggle often impact on their families and their communities with often sad and tragic outcomes. The State government's investment in this and 15 other such Centres is a welcome acknowledgement that we can avoid heartbreaking results by creating places in which parents and children can find the support and encouragement they need. Places that are intended to be source of inspiration, practical advice and community acceptance and support.

We could simply see these Centres as financial investments that will avoid future expenditure in service provision. However, to view Child Parent Centres purely in these terms is to devalue them. These Centres, if we sustain them in the long-term, will give us far more than a healthier bottom line. They have the potential to ensure that children grow in a manner that will allow them to flourish and maximise their potential. Centres such as these can become wellsprings of talent, creativity, social cohesiveness and moral awareness. This is not an overstatement. We know how much talent and creative potential is lost by early, negative experiences. We have many examples when social exclusion has led to disaffection, division and violence. When viewed in these term, Child Parent Centres have the capacity to make an invaluable contribution to our communities.

CentreCare's latest annual report is dedicated to "Our Children". The high levels of child maltreatment in Australia (40,844 substantiated cases in 2013-14), the worrying statistics on the significant amount of anxiety among the young and the harrowing stories from the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse are a sobering reminder of the dire reality that many children live. It also asks us to individually and collectively build safe and supportive environments for all our children not just our own. CentreCare is 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.

CentreCare's Audrey Turner, the Coordinator of this Centre, has been involved with the local community for the past 18 months. She, with the support of our Executive Manager in this region, Leanne Strommen, has been working hard to forge those relationships that are very important to ensuring that the Gosnells Child Parent Centre is as successful as possible. Audrey is very commitment to her work and wants this Centre to become a significant source of support to the Gosnells primary school community as well as those of Ashburton Drive; Huntingdale; Seaforth; St Munchin's; Wirrabirra and Wirrabirra Education Support

What has been particularly encouraging throughout the process of establishing this Child Parent Centre has been the support received from our host principal, Craig Anderson and the principals of all the associated schools. With have greatly valued the willing assistance of the Department of Education, especially the team at the Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning, the City of Gosnells and other service providers in this region. Without such support and that of the Local Advisory Committee it would have been much harder to begin and sustain the work. It has been a pleasure working with you all.

The ongoing partnership between the State departments of Education, Health, Child Protection and Family Support and Local Government and Communities will ensure that the Centre has the capacity to be a source of effective assistance to the local community.

We all know that little is attained on our own. The achievements that are truly valuable are usually the result of multiple efforts by a number of different people and this is the case with



the Gosnells Child Parent Centre. Centrecare is committed to making this Centre as effective as it 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 whether government or non-government. 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.

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 Gosnells community. This is something well worth celebrating as this initiative creates wonderful opportunities for our community, especially its children.