

CHAIRPERSON

A note from Helen Creed



As part of developing our second strategic plan, in 2021, we identified two major challenges in achieving our objectives- financial viability and attracting and retaining staff. Reflecting back at this year's AGM, I think it would be true to say that the impact of both issues has been even more profound than we envisaged. And they are very much interconnected.

Our financial viability depends on enrolling sufficient children to meet all our costs and to do that we need to attract and retain staff in our centres. So, we have made the decision to spend significant resources on attraction and retention incentives, staff accommodation, recruitment companies and the like as we compete not only with large services in urban areas and similarly qualified staff in education settings but burgeoning wages in other sectors of the economy particularly in the regions.

Throughout what has been a difficult year REED has maintained our focus on delivering a range of high quality services across the regions. We have continued to merge additional centres in with REED, we have provided exciting professional

development opportunities for our staff, we have been increasingly recognised as a major player in regional children's services and we have enhanced our efforts in advocating for the needs of children and families in regional communities.

As you know, one of my guiding tenets is Encourage Effort; Celebrate Success. In that context I wanted to specifically mention our nomination as a finalist in the WA RISE Business Awards in the Not For Profit category. When you consider that Foodbank which won the award and the other finalists- Guide Dogs WA, Lifeline and St Pat's in Fremantle have all been around as organisations for many, many years, it underlines REED's achievement since our launch in March 2018.

Early childhood issues and particularly the importance of early childhood education and care, has been elevated as an area of significant concern to Federal and State politicians and the broader corporate sector. REED was delighted to have Dr Anne Aly, Federal Minister for Early Childhood Education as both our dinner speaker at the Educator's Conference in January

and the reader of Katie Stewart's book - Where Do the Stars Go- as part of our fifth anniversary celebrations. We also welcomed the creation of a new Ministerial Portfolio of Early Childhood Education by the WA Government in December and the appointment of Minister Sabine Winton to this role. Ongoing advocacy by REED will be important to ensure that these positive developments translate into real benefits for both young children and their families as well as the early childhood education and care workforce across our regions.

At an AGM, it is important to recognise the many people who have made a contribution to REED. As well as thanking my fellow Board members, our staff and in particular Kylie Helgesen and our Senior Management Team and others who work with us such as the external members of our Board Committees, I particularly wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge several people who were absolutely key to our establishment and initial success who are no longer involved as closely with REED.

//
Throughout what has been a difficult year REED has maintained our focus on delivering a range of high quality services across the regions.

Firstly, the original project team led by Jill Cameron and Michael White. I remember at our first strategic planning session that Michael used the analogy that we were continuing to build the plane as we were flying it and have reflected many times how apt a description that was. Jill will continue to be a significant presence with the awarding of the Educator of the Year Award named in her honour that is presented at our Educator's Conference.

Secondly, there are two WA Members of Parliament, who particularly stand out. Minister Simone McGurk who launched REED in March 2018 and was a great advocate for REED to receive the covid funding when the pandemic started and we were still in the process of merging with a number of services, who changed portfolios last December; and Mia Davies, the Member of Parliament representing many of the towns in which REED services are based, who stepped down as Leader of the National Party and Opposition Leader earlier this year.

My thanks to all of you for the contribution that you are making to our ongoing success. As I have said on many occasions, I am very conscious that in my role as Chair, I both value, and draw on, the support that I receive from all of you and I sincerely appreciate it.