



**Speech** 26 February 2013

**Michelle Scott, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA**

**'Children, young people and the arts seminar'**

**Welcome**

Thank you and good afternoon everybody. Welcome to this creative event!

Thank you Ingrid, for your warm welcome. I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the traditional owners and elders of the land on which we meet today.

I would like to acknowledge Jonathan Holloway, the Director of the Perth International Arts Festival, who is also one of my Ambassadors for children and young people

Two other Ambassadors for children and young people are also here today.

- Annie Fogarty- Annie is the Executive Chairperson of the Fogarty Foundation who among many other things is partnering with the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts on a three-year pilot program named Spark\_Lab, which uses contemporary arts to encourage and promote innovation in primary and secondary school students.
- Professor Donna Cross from Edith Cowan University-who is an international leader in researching issues which impact the wellbeing of children and young people

I would like to thank the WA Museum for your support in providing this great venue for today's seminar.

I would like to thank Jonathan Holloway and PIAF for agreeing to partner with me for this event.

It is good to be here today during the Perth International Arts Festival which is in its third week!

At the start of this year's festival Jonathan implored us all not to sleep-to take full advantage of all that the Festival has to offer-he said we could all sleep in March!

I want to report to you Jonathan that I am trying my best!

We have already seen some amazing events at this year's festival.

This is the third year as Commissioner that I have sponsored an event or performance at the festival. This is because I think children and young people should be at the centre of our creative and cultural endeavours.

Yesterday I went to 'The House of Dreaming' and was allowed to visit the House, where even as an adult, I could use my imagination and dream!

There were children from two schools visiting at the time the children told me they were excited and nervous as they entered the house and when they left they shared their dreams - what a wonderful experience.

I am pleased that we have Christian Leavesly -artistic director with the Arena Theatre company which developed the House of Dreaming with us today.

Last year I had the unique opportunity to be taken on a guided tour of the Picasso to Warhol exhibition at the WA Art Gallery by a group of young children. This was an initiative of Jenny Simpson the CEO of Awesome who is also with us today.

I am a lover of art and visit art galleries frequently. This really was one of the best guided tours I have had. The children were articulate, knowledgeable, inquiring and curious. They helped me appreciate the works more fully and at the same time left me with many questions. It was a truly uplifting and nourishing experience.

I have over the last twelve months had the opportunity to attend two remarkable performances under the Artistic Direction of John Sheedy at the Barking Gheko Theatre Company, who is also here today.

Last year I saw the energetic Driving into Walls in which 5 young actors and dancers brought to life the views of 500 young Western Australians.

This year I saw the moving, funny and serious Duck, Death and the Tulip-in which a duck strikes up an unlikely friendship with death.

One of my roles as Commissioner is to promote the participation of our youngest citizens, children and young people, and to encourage others to do the same.

We can do this in many ways and we can be creative about how we do it!

Today is an opportunity to explore creative ways of involving children and young people in our organisations- with an audience not only of arts practitioners and those for whom creativity is their daily life but also many who work with children and young people and want to explore and expand their options for working creatively.

We have a great panel of Australians who will also be joined by our international guest Michael Tuffery who is a highly acclaimed artist from New Zealand.

Recently an eleven year old girl told me:

*Children maybe younger but are packed full of ideas and creativity that could change lives-if only heard*

I look forward to the discussion today with great interest.

Thank you