



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 15 September 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Brisbane Writers Festival

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: From 14 to 17 October, the Brisbane Writers Festival will again demonstrate the positive results of this Government's policy and funding commitment to supporting the arts industry in this State, in particular Queensland's writers. The Brisbane Writers Festival, now in its fourth year, has grown in scope and scale since its inception. Today, it extends from a forum for promoting new talents to international and national publishers to an event including writing workshops and a major cultural tourism campaign and an important educational school program.

Two days of the festival will be dedicated to promoting reading and writing among young people and secondary school students. This is a rare opportunity to guide and nurture the next generation of Queensland writers. In recognition of this rapid growth, the festival has received an additional \$17,500 this year from Arts Queensland, taking its overall allocation to \$153,325. This is a sound investment in an event which has, over its short life, achieved national and international recognition. It is also a sound investment in this Government's promotion of the richness and variety of our State's literary life. That richness is demonstrated not just by established household names such as Judith Wright and Oodgeroo Noonuccal, David Malouf and Thomas Shapcott, but by the outstanding achievements of our lesser known, emerging writers in diverse and highly competitive fields such as film, television and radio.

Queenslanders won no fewer than five of the 23 awards at the recent 1999 Australian Writers Guild Awgies—the top industry awards for film, television, stage and radio writing. Once again, the 1999 Brisbane Writers Festival program will showcase a wealth of established and emerging talent, with a stellar line-up of Queensland, Australian and international writers. Among the most important events of the festival will be the announcement of the major literary awards for 1999, which this year, with the generous involvement of the Premier's Department and the Courier Mail, amount to over \$200,000.

It will be my pleasure at the 1999 Brisbane Writers Festival to announce a new award of \$15,000 for the inaugural Minister for The Arts Award for Poetry. Poetry remains one of Queensland's greatest literary traditions and in July this year the 1999 Queensland Poetry Festival received \$25,470 in funding from Arts Queensland, with \$6,000 in awards for unpublished poetry.

I will also have the pleasure of announcing at the Brisbane Writers Festival the 1999 Steele Rudd Australian Short Story Award, which this year has been increased by \$5,000 to \$15,000. Other awards to be announced at the festival are the inaugural Queensland Premier's Literary Awards—six categories totalling \$115,000; the inaugural Courier-Mail Book of the Year Award for \$30,000; and the inaugural City of Brisbane/Qantas Prize for Asia-Pacific Travel Writing for \$12,000. Another important prize will be the 1999 David Unaipon Award for unpublished work by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander writer. Funded by Arts Queensland through the University of Queensland Press, this year it will be increased from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

We welcome the support this year of the Premier's Department, the Courier-Mail, the Brisbane City Council, Qantas and Tourism Queensland, which will again host a three-day writers' retreat on Fraser Island—a strategic marketing move which will, undoubtedly, pay off with the appearance of more Queensland tourist attractions in the best-sellers of the future.