



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Premier's Literary Awards

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: I am proud to announce that I am establishing the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards to add further encouragement to Australian writers, especially Queenslanders. In a turning point for writing in this State, these awards worth \$115,000 complement the newly established Courier-Mail \$30,000 Book of the Year Award to give a major boost to the literary profile of Queensland in Australia.

The winners will be announced at the Brisbane's Writers Festival in October, adding even more prestige to a festival which has already become a major focus for writers and writing throughout Australia and which has been well supported by the Minister for The Arts. It is important to acknowledge the contribution and commitment of the festival to these awards and of the esteemed position the festival has established in the writing world.

As we prepare to enter the new millennium, I believe that it is important that the State Government should join with the festival in fostering a thriving literary culture in Queensland and throughout Australia. The new awards join the well-established Steele Rudd Award for Short Stories—the only award of its kind in Australia and also sponsored by the State Government—and the City of Brisbane/Qantas Prize for Asia Pacific Travel Writing, which is another unique award in that it addresses our region. Together they mean that Queensland is now in a position to lead the country in the support and promotion of writing.

The Premier's awards should not only encourage authors but should also create a greater interest among the general public in reading new Australian work. I am proud to announce that among the categories is a \$20,000 prize for the best emerging Queensland writer. If we want Queensland to produce good writers, we need to encourage them along the way and these awards are a positive contribution to mentoring them. Another award unique among these awards is the current affairs category, with its inclusion of entries from the electronic media. Whether we like it or not, we now live in the Internet age and an increasing number of Australians, especially in rural and regional areas, rely on new media for their information and entertainment.

The six categories are: best fiction book, \$25,000; best literary work advancing public debate, including print and electronic media, \$25,000; best manuscript for an emerging Queensland author, \$20,000; best history book \$15,000—and by the way, we do not spend enough time writing about Queensland history and that is something that we need to address—best children's book, \$15,000; and best drama, \$15,000. These categories are designed to complement the Courier-Mail's Book of the Year prize, which gathers many of the works we will be honouring under a single banner.

Queensland has long possessed a thriving writing and publishing community, which produces world-acclaimed authors and with our people, geography and locations, has the opportunity, in our view, to foster creativity. The awards should serve to encourage the growth of that community in both size and quality. I look forward to being able to congratulate the first winners of the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards at a gala dinner at the Brisbane Writers' Festival later this year—an event which attracts international attention.
