



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Reading Challenge

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.38 am): I am delighted today to be launching with education minister, Rod Welford, the state's first reading challenge—an exciting initiative for Queensland's youngest school students. Open to all kids from prep or preschool to year 3, the challenge will help foster a love of reading, boost literacy skills and build upon our already strong literacy record. Queensland's average reading literacy results, and the results of our top young readers, are among the best in the world. The latest national figures released in March found about 97 per cent of Queensland students achieved the reading benchmark in year 3 and the writing benchmarks in years 5 and 7—the highest percentage of any state or territory.

We must build on this record. My government has made no secret of the fact that literacy is at the heart of a student's ability to learn, and to succeed in school and adult life. That is why earlier this year we launched the comprehensive blueprint to boost student literacy skills in Queensland state schools. The 'Literacy—the Key to Learning: Framework for Action 2006 to 2008' is ensuring that every classroom teacher from prep to year 9 has intensive training in the teaching of literacy.

Today, through the inaugural Reading Challenge, I am also asking students from prep or preschool to year 2 to read or 'experience' 20 books from today until 15 September. Year 3 students meanwhile are being asked to read 10 books. This is not a competition, however, and every student who meets the challenge will receive a congratulatory certificate to mark their achievement. Schools with the greatest number of participants will also be acknowledged.

I encourage all Queenslanders with young children to get behind the Reading Challenge, which affirms the essential role books can play in young people's lives. I am pleased today to also be launching the program at Brisbane Central State School in my electorate. I thank Rod Welford, the minister, for his organisation of this launch.