




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Gladstone Literacy Centre

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (7.27 pm): Tonight I rise to speak about the Gladstone Literacy Centre and the specialised program that has been successfully making a difference to primary school children in Gladstone since 2001. Last month it was fantastic to see the Palaszczuk government launch a suite of initiatives to support reading and writing, and to strengthen children's literacy in Queensland. The Premier's Reading Challenge is again encouraging children to read, as is the reintroduction of the successful Ready Reader Program, which was scrapped by the short-sighted LNP government in 2012. The Palaszczuk government is investing more than \$1.5 million to support up to 3,000 reading volunteers in our schools to share their love of reading.

Children are our future and literacy is the foundation of their education. Should they struggle with literacy, their education will suffer. In my electorate, 559 children have been given a second chance and have completed a program that changes lives. The cornerstone of the Gladstone Literacy Centre program, in partnership with Education Queensland, is the dedicated and passionate trained volunteer reading tutors who spend 20 minutes a day one-on-one with each student, pausing, prompting and praising their reading. Collectively, that is 40 hours each week spent listening to children read. Available to years 3 to 6 students with a reading age assessed to be two or more years below their chronological age, the program gives each student a personal program pitched at their level of ability. On average, the program is delivering an increase in accuracy and comprehension of 15 months above initial assessment, which is fantastic for those kids.

The key to this success is that each student is given time to master each essential foundation stone of literacy before moving on. As their confidence grows, their ability to read grows, as does their comprehension and ability to write, and their enjoyment of learning increases. Learning is celebrated with weekly awards, photos and phone calls to parents. Each student also learns responsibility, social skills, discipline, independence, self-belief and time management. The success stories are notable and reports from parents, teachers and guidance officers are that with increased confidence the students are thriving.

The Rotary Club of South Gladstone runs a weekly mentoring program, engaging business leaders, past students, emergency service workers and elected officers to speak with students. My twin brother and I have been invited to speak to the current intake, which has eight sets of twins across the two groups. It will be a privilege to swap twin stories with the kids. In closing, I make special mention of the very humble founder of the program, Mr Chris Tanner, who in 2015 was acknowledged for service to education in the Gladstone community with an Order of Australia medal.