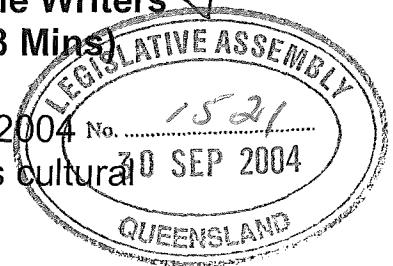


MINISTERIAL STATEMENT – Anna Bligh – Brisbane Writers Festival and Queensland Writing Strategy (3 Mins)

Mr Speaker, later today I will be officially opening the 2004 Brisbane Writers Festival a key event in Queensland's cultural calendar.



Writing is core to so many creative works – from books, poems and songs, to film scripts, plays and even computer games – words are their foundation.

Last night the celebration of the written word started with the presentation of the annual Queensland Premiers Literary Awards – and I was very pleased to join the Premier to honour some of the Smart State's finest emerging and established writers.

Mr Speaker, the Brisbane Writers Festival offers something for everyone from writers of all forms to avid readers.

The Brisbane Writers festival is unique in both location and relaxed style, plus Queensland has a committed Writers Centre that mentors and supports our emerging writers and a revolutionary print on demand centre at the University of Queensland Press.

The Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland, has contributed more than \$141 000 to the festival in acknowledgment of the importance of writing to the Smart State.

Writers and the written word can empower us to decide, move us to act, instruct us in our learning and help us to make sense of the world.

By supporting the people who produce these works and helping them to develop networks, enhance their business skills and identify new markets, the Queensland Government is highlighting the value of writing as one of our most important cultural tools.

The Brisbane Writers Festival is the leading literary event in Queensland, and 90 percent of events are free.

The festival hub is the Cultural Forecourt of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, and there are also many offsite venues, including the Brisbane Powerhouse, Customs House, the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts, Council Libraries and La Boite Theatre.

This year's theme is 'Rebirth and Re-imagination', highlighting the importance of recognising past literary achievements and of focusing on the future of writing in Queensland.

The 2004 program includes over 240 local, national and international authors covering all aspects of writing.

~~V~~oices, a new attraction, presented in association with the Energex Brisbane Festival, is an inspirational concert series combining words and music and involving writers, composers and four of Australia's finest chamber ensembles.

~~T~~he 2004 festival program highlights Queenslanders like novelist Nick Earls, interstate writers such as playwright Louis Nowra and novelists Peter Robb, Robert Dessaix and Marion Halligan, and overseas writers.

~~T~~he festival also has a strong Indigenous program, writing workshops and a literary marketplace for organisations supporting writers.

I congratulate the festival organisers for creating a rich and diverse program that has something for every writing enthusiast or avid reader.

Mr Speaker, our Government is committed to developing and supporting the writing sector, that's why I am today launching the *Creative Writers – Queensland Writing Strategy 2004-2006* which embodies the State Government's recognition of the cultural and economic value of writing.

This strategy is significant as it will encourage the development of new modes of writing for new markets such as the games, music and film industries.

Our community of writers will be promoted and marketed into national and international contexts.

We will build on our writing infrastructure to make sure it benefits all Queensland writers – providing specific opportunities for regional, rural and Indigenous writers.

Creative Writers will also promote stronger partnerships between writers with schools, libraries and local communities.

Since 2000, the State Government through Arts Queensland has invested more than \$4m in the writing sector.

Over the next three years *Creative Writers* will add a further \$1.33m to the Queensland Government's commitment to writing.

Mr Speaker, I encourage all Members to visit the Brisbane Writers Festival.