



Dr. Brendan Nelson

A Message from the Australian Government Minister for Education, Science and Training

I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to a magazine that showcases the literary talents of our school children.

Since I have become the Australian Government Minister for Education, Science and Training, many of you will have become aware of my commitment to ensure that all Australians have the opportunity to develop the essential skills of literacy and numeracy. I believe that literacy and numeracy skills form crucial building blocks that equip young Australians to take their future place in a global economy.

The Australian Government, together with State and Territory Education Ministers, have agreed to a National Goal that will help us to ensure that every student reaches an appropriate standard of literacy and numeracy. Also agreed is the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, which gives focus and support to the achievement of the Goal. The Australian Government works cooperatively with the State and Territory education authorities for a coordinated approach to the National Plan. Under the National Plan, all students are assessed in their early years of schooling in order to identify those students at risk of not achieving acceptable literacy and numeracy standards, and to implement intervention strategies to meet their needs and improve their learning outcomes.

In partnership with schools, teachers, parents and the community, we all have a responsibility to ensure that Australian children are given every opportunity to develop these foundational skills. I believe it is important that we show a positive attitude towards the value of books and learning so that Australian students receive the best possible education. Working together by reading regularly with children, asking questions about their favourite characters, enquiring about what may happen next in the book, and encouraging children to use the library for pleasure, as well as to find information, will help develop the skills they need to effectively participate in school, the workforce and in society.

I commend the Australian Children's Literary Board's efforts to promote excellence in literacy. I note that it has awarded a number of young writers for their excellent work. I applaud the efforts of the Australian Children's Literary Board and its magazine, *Oz Kidz in Print* in acknowledging and promoting the writing skills of our talented young Australians. I hope that through this publication your organisation continues to inspire many more young people to write and to continually improve their literacy skills.

I was able to witness first hand the great work our schools are doing to develop literacy and numeracy skills in their students during the National Literacy and Numeracy Week. I had the pleasure of presenting fourteen Excellence Awards to schools from across Australia. To talk with the teachers, students and parents from these schools at the ceremony only served to reinforce for me, the knowledge that there are a lot of great things happening in our schools and that the attainment of literacy and numeracy skills by our children is a goal we all share.

I also had the pleasure of awarding Achievement Awards to 60 primary and secondary schools across Australia for their outstanding achievement in improving the literacy and numeracy skills of their students. You can find out more about the awards and the events of National Literacy and Numeracy Week at:
<http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/>.