EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Premier’s Reading Challenge (the Challenge) is a literacy engagement program that challenges South Australian students from Reception to Year 9 to read 12 books by September each year across all three education sectors. It was in its seventh year of operation in 2010 and it was the first year Hall of Fame medals were presented to students for achieving the Challenge for seven years. Hall of Fame students were further acknowledged by joining the Hall of Fame honour roll on the Challenge website.

In 2010, the Challenge supported the Literacy Secretariat in contributing to the achievement of the Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS) priorities. This was done by focusing on the literacy development of our young people enabling them to maximise their potential and to create the best opportunities for their success in the future.

The Challenge also supported South Australia’s Strategic Plan priorities in literacy, the DECS Statement of Directions 2005–2010 in Goal 2: Excellence in learning, the DECS Aboriginal Strategy 2005–2010 specifically in Key focus area 3: Literacy and numeracy and the Australian Curriculum, particularly in English. The Challenge will continue to contribute to the achievement of literacy targets as DECS moves forward with its Strategic Directions 2011.

Outcomes from 2010

- The Challenge was completed by 116,282 students, which is approximately 57% of all South Australian students from Reception to Year 9, a 3% increase from 2009.
- A minimum of 1.3 million books were read by students completing the Challenge in 2010.
- Students from 751 schools completed the Challenge, which is 97% of eligible schools.
- A total of 3,116 Indigenous students completed the Challenge, a 16.7% increase from 2009.
- Public libraries supported students to complete the Challenge through their encouragement and the supply of requested books.
- There were 274 home education students who completed the Challenge.
- In the results for the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in 2010, DECS students completing the Challenge in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 showed better rates of reading growth than DECS students who did not complete, reinforcing a similar result from 2009.

The Premier’s Reception was held at the University of South Australia in November 2010. Representatives from 50 schools with outstanding achievement were invited to attend this event that attracted more than 200 guests.

The 14 ambassadors – high profile South Australians – made a valued contribution to the program. Ambassador teams continued to be a key promotional initiative for the Challenge in 2010 with the addition of three high profile South Australian teams to the program. Adelaide United Football Club and Link Lightning Adelaide were joined by the Adelaide Football Club, Port Adelaide Football Club and the Thunderbirds as joint ambassador teams for the Premier’s be active Challenge and the Premier’s Reading Challenge.

In order to gain some feedback on the effectiveness of the Premier’s Reading Challenge and to inform decision making for future directions, surveys for students, staff and parents were available on the website. There were 291 respondents to the student survey, of whom 40% were males and 60% were females, with 77% attending public schools. Of the 165 staff respondents to the teacher survey almost 90% were teacher librarians. There were 19 parent respondents. Although survey feedback cannot be assumed to be representative, it suggested a high degree of satisfaction with the program.

A number of themes emerged from the feedback about the major benefits associated with the Challenge, including that it:

- motivated students to achieve a goal, with the awards providing a strong incentive to read, increasing the self-esteem of students
- encouraged students who were not keen readers to increase their reading to complete the Challenge and that this noticeably included boys
- improved reading and increased student interest in reading due to various factors such as being able to find the appropriate level of books, staff knowing more about what individual students like to read, and students becoming aware of a wider variety of good quality authors, titles and series
- increased borrowing of books from the library
- provided a positive promotion of reading and a whole school focus on reading success. Staff, parents and students were proud of what they had achieved with the Challenge.