



Dominic Perrottet
Treasurer

Sarah Mitchell
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning

MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday, 20 June 2021

\$8 MILLION STAR BOOST TO LITERACY BUDGET

Entertainer and humanitarian Dolly Parton knows all about working nine to five and now her charitable organisation is about to work even harder to help boost children's literacy levels, following an \$8 million partnership with the NSW Government.

Treasurer Dominic Perrottet said the funding over five years was included in the 2021-22 NSW Budget and would see the Department of Education join forces with United Way Australia to deliver free books to families across the State, with a focus on those most vulnerable.

"Opening up a book helps to open a child's mind and this early literacy program will give young children across the State more opportunities to do just that," Mr Perrottet said.

"They'll be given a free book from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library each month until they start school to encourage their reading and give them the best start possible in life."

The program currently supports over 3,000 children in 17 communities across NSW, including Ryde, Mount Druitt and Tamworth. The 2021-22 Budget investment will increase the program's reach to 15,000 children in vulnerable communities, to boost their school readiness.

Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning Sarah Mitchell said the Government is dedicated to supporting our youngest learners.

"The opportunity for parents to read with their young children is something I want every family in NSW to experience. The research shows that children who start reading early and often will benefit across every aspect of their life and well into adulthood," Ms Mitchell said.

"This program is part of this government's commitment under Brighter Beginnings to support families in the first 2000 days of their child's life, so that children can start school with a solid foundation for lifelong learning."

The library, as part of The Dollywood Foundation, has mailed more than 150 million free books to children in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

Dolly Parton said she was excited that children in NSW would join over 1.8 million children around the world who receive high-quality, age appropriate books every month.

"I'm so thrilled to learn that my Imagination Library will be an important part of the NSW Government's 'Brighter Beginnings' initiative," Ms Parton said.

“I always say, you can never get enough books into the hands of young children, and I’m grateful the Treasurer and Minister Mitchell share our vision for getting books to children and families.

“Along with our trusted partners at United Way Australia, I know that we will inspire many NSW children to develop a love of reading and start school ready to succeed.

“This is such an exciting start, and I hope soon we will be able to enroll children and families all across NSW.”

United Way Australia partners with publishers, families, authors, librarians and academics to select age appropriate and culturally sensitive local and international materials.

Families and carers will also have the benefit of targeted advice on how to boost their children’s early language and literacy development through reading, as well as connections to local community and support programs.

**MEDIA: Amber Muir | Treasurer | 0447 695 520
Taylor Denny | 0439 760 111**