

**BETTER BEGINNINGS FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM —  
US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS LITERACY AWARD**

*Statement by Minister for Culture and the Arts*

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts)** [12.04 pm]: I would like to inform the house that the State Library of Western Australia's Better Beginnings Family Literacy Program has been awarded a Best Practice Honoree in the 2017 US Library of Congress Literacy Awards, to be announced on Friday. The State Library has delivered the Better Beginnings program since 2004, providing over 550 000 families statewide with developmentally appropriate books and resources and access to Rhyme Time and Story Time sessions at their local libraries. This prestigious international award recognises best practice in literacy provision, and acknowledges the evidence-based approach adopted by the State Library through its ongoing evaluation partnership of the Better Beginnings program conducted by Edith Cowan University. The honour comes with a prize of \$US5 000. Better Beginnings will be profiled in the *Library of Congress Literacy Awards*, distributed to 1 750 literacy organisations and educators worldwide. Many members would know how critical it is in those early years for children, babies and toddlers to be continually exposed to good, positive early literacy experiences. The Better Beginnings program ensures that children and their parents are able to access in an ongoing fashion the resources and activities available in local libraries that are based on positive, early literacy modelling.

I am pleased to inform the house that funding has been secured for the continuation of the Better Beginnings program. I would also like to acknowledge the significant funding partnership with Rio Tinto and local government authorities that guarantees the delivery of this valuable program in partnership with public libraries and child health nurses. A recent Social Return on Investment analysis revealed that for every dollar invested in the program there is a \$5.64 return in social value. I sincerely congratulate the State Library and its partners on the awarding of this prestigious honoree from the Library of Congress as a great honour to the state, and I commend the Better Beginnings program to all members of this house.