

# PREMIER LAUNCHES \$1 FARE FOR KIDS ON COUNTRYLINK

Premier Nathan Rees today encouraged families to holiday in country NSW, with CountryLink offering \$1 fares for children over summer. Mr Rees said from today CountryLink is offering a deal which allows up to four children under 16, accompanied by full-fare paying Adult family member, to travel anywhere on its network for just one dollar. "This deal makes train travel very affordable for families in a time when everyone is trying to keep to a tight budget," Mr Rees said.

"With fuel prices still hitting families hard in the hip pocket – this is a great alternative. "There are many great places to visit in Country NSW but the deal also extends to CountryLink destinations in Queensland, the ACT and Victoria.

"These \$1 tickets will help families to get out there and have a great experience over the summer break.

"Families can take CountryLink services in NSW to areas such as Queanbeyan, Bathurst, Katoomba, Moree, Dubbo and Broken Hill." This summer deal

offers substantial savings, for example:

- Sydney to Dubbo is normally \$39.20 for a child, the promotional fare is \$1

- Sydney to Coffs Harbour is normally \$47.30 for a child, the promotional fare is \$1

Transport Minister David Campbell and Member for Monaro Steve Whan joined the Premier for the announcement. Mr Campbell said the deal would be available until the end of February on CountryLink which is the State's country rail service.

"Up to four children under 16 will be able to travel to any of the 360 destinations in NSW, Queensland, the ACT and Victoria, for one dollar when they are accompanied by a full fare paying adult."

"This is a good opportunity to promote the important service CountryLink offers to those who want to travel across NSW and interstate."

Mr Whan said this is a fantastic opportunity for families to have an affordable holiday in regional and rural NSW. "For many families, overseas travel just

isn't an option and it's great see the NSW Government providing an affordable alternative.

"We have stunning beaches and the rugged natural beauty of regional NSW on our doorstep.

"I encourage all families to take this opportunity to see what regional and rural NSW has to offer."

Premier Rees said the deal meant more families would be able to visit friends and relatives during the holidays at an affordable price. "Many people spend time travelling over the Christmas holidays to see their loved ones and I would encourage them to consider taking advantage of this great deal and using the train to get to their destination," Mr Rees said.

"Recent improvements to the iconic CountryLink XPT fleet make the deal even more attractive for families. "NSW residents and interstate tourists are reaping the benefits of a \$42 million upgrade to the 60 carriages and 19 power cars in the XPT fleet."

For more information visit the CountryLink website at [www.countrylink.info/](http://www.countrylink.info/) or call 13 22 32.



## PREMIER HONOURS NSW'S YOUNG READERS

*Premier Nathan Rees today congratulated the record number of NSW students who tackled this year's Premier's Reading Challenge during a celebration at Parramatta Riverside Theatre.*



*Fun ... Oliver, Esther, Rosie, Jimmy and George Lennon, who are all taking on the Premier's Reading Challenge. Photo: James Brickwood*

Joined by the Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth, the Premier congratulated the students' commitment to improving their literacy skills.

"This year was a huge success, with 156,774 students completing the Premier's Reading Challenge and strengthening their reading abilities," Mr Rees said.

"I congratulate each and every one of these students on taking the opportunity to find enjoyment in reading while also improving their literacy skills.

"These students represent nearly 2,000 primary and secondary schools across NSW, and have collectively read more than 4 million books this year.

"That means more than 12.4 million books have been read since the Challenge was introduced in 2002.

"These students should be extremely proud of their achievements – reading between 20-30 books in seven months means putting aside the easy distractions of life outside school. "Congratulations also to the teacher-librarians, classroom teachers, public librarians, and parents who supported them."

Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth, said the Premier's Reading Challenge was getting stronger and stronger each year.

"This year there was a 13% increase in the number of students who took part," Ms Firth said.

"There has been an overwhelming 2,557% increase since 2002, when 5,900 students successfully completed the first year of the Premier's Reading Challenge.

"In 2008 we are also awarding 12,401 students with gold certificates, which are given to students after their fourth year of participating in the Challenge.

"I am confident that next year's Challenge will be even bigger - 554 new books have been added to the list to give our enthusiastic readers a wider choice." Mr Rees said that as part of the new ambassadors program, we are also welcoming seven ambassadors to the Challenge.

"They will help us encourage students across the State to take part in the Reading Challenge," Mr Rees said.

"Four of these ambassadors – Peter FitzSimons, Hazem El Masri, Deborah Abela and Libby Gleeson - are here today to help us celebrate the achievements of the students who competed in this year's Challenge.

"This is all part of the NSW Government's \$616 million four-year investment to further improve literacy and numeracy rates at NSW public

schools.

"The Reading Challenge is one of the reasons our public schools have some of the highest literacy rates in the world."

The Reading Challenge is supported by principal partner Dymocks Literacy Foundation, media partner The Sun-Herald and supporting partners Laubman & Pank and OPSM.

Schools representatives:

- Al Faisal College, Auburn
- Ashfield Boys High School
- Burnside Public School
- Concord West Public School
- Davidson High School
- Emu Heights Public School
- Hilltop Road Public School
- Metella Rd Public School
- Nepean High School
- Oatlands Public School
- Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta
- Rowland Hassall School
- Sacred Heart Primary School, Westmead
- Sefton High School
- Seven Hills West Public School
- St Patrick's Primary School, Parramatta
- Tara Anglican School for Girls
- The King's School

## Federal Government schools funding - a step in the right direction

The NSW Teachers Federation welcomes new schools funding increases announced at the COAG meeting last Saturday, although they do not go far enough according to Senior Vice President Gary Zadkovich.

"The National Partnerships policy will help address the needs of disadvantaged students with \$1.1 billion extra over four years, and more properly support professional development and quality teaching initiatives for teachers with \$550 million. Additional literacy and numeracy funding of \$540 million is also welcome.

"The main problem is the maintenance of the unfair Howard model of recurrent funding. In a total budget of \$42.4 billion for 2009-2012, public schools with two-thirds of the nation's students will still receive only one third of the funding. "A small positive step, however, is the pledge to lift public primary school funding to the same level as high schools. This will mean an extra \$400 million over four years for the foundation years of public education.

"The Teachers Federation looks forward to working with the NSW Government to implement programs arising from the National Partnerships funding. Crucial in these negotiations will be the State Government's approach to Federal requirements for greater transparency and accountability.

"Given the work already conducted by the NSW Institute of Teachers regarding advanced standards of teaching practice and the highly regarded equity programs already operating in NSW public schools, we have the basis for alignment with the Federal requirements.