



School literacy skills program expanded

A **NATIONALLY** recognised program that helps to fast-track children's reading, writing and spelling skills has been expanded as part of the State Government's focus on literacy in schools.

Accelerated Literacy is a program used by 39 South Australian schools this year, compared with 18 in 2005 and is part of the government's \$35 million Early Years Literacy Program.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said literacy skills need to be pushed.

"Good literacy skills are at the heart of children's learning and are essential to students progressing well through school," she said.

Schools decide locally whether they wish to be a part of the program, which helps students to comprehend, read and write complex texts.

"It has been shown to improve the reading age of children in a short period of time," Dr Lomax-Smith said.

The program has a full-time manager this year and four program officers have been appointed throughout the state to help teachers to implement the program.

Dr Lomax-Smith said the program has found new ways to improve children's literacy.

"When students fail at literacy it seems logical for teachers to work on easier reading material, but this can lead to students remaining at a low level throughout their schooling," she said.

"Accelerated Literacy enables student to learn from texts suitable for their age group, which can accelerate their learning in a shorter period of time," she said.

Under the program, students and their teachers read and analyse an appropriate text and focus on author techniques and grammar.

Children use what they have learnt about the text in writing workshops and use new words from the text during spelling lessons.

The program was developed by Charles Darwin University's Dr Brian Gray and Wendy Cowet and was first introduced as a national framework for schools in 2000.

The national framework was originally developed for Indigenous students but is now being used more broadly in most Australian states and territories.