



Ready to Read program	
Party:	The Coalition
<p>Summary of proposal:</p> <p>The proposal would provide \$3.8 million over 4 years to establish the 'Ready to Read' program, an initiative to support early childhood literacy and ensure children have the best start to their education.</p> <p>Once fully implemented, the program would be expected to benefit 12,500 children under 5 years of age in targeted areas by providing one book per month to support early literacy development. The program is licensed to United Way Australia who will recommend roll-out areas in consultation with the Department of Education, focusing on communities experiencing disadvantage and where local libraries can be active partners.</p> <p>The proposal funding profile would be \$0.6 million in each of 2025-26 and 2026-27, \$1 million in 2027-28, and \$1.6 million in 2028-29.</p> <p>The proposal would be non-ongoing and start from 1 July 2025.</p>	

Costing overview

The proposal would be expected to decrease the fiscal and underlying cash balances by around \$3.8 million over the 2025-26 Budget forward estimates period (see Table 1). This impact reflects an increase in administered and departmental expenses.

The proposal would not be expected to have an impact beyond the 2025-26 Budget forward estimates period, other than for public debt interest (PDI) costs. A breakdown of the financial implications (including separate PDI tables) over the period to 2035-36 is provided at Attachment A.

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has not made any assessment as to whether the specified funding would be sufficient to meet the objectives of the proposal.

Table 1: Ready to Read program – Financial implications (\$m)^{(a)(b)}

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total to 2028-29
Fiscal balance	-0.6	-0.6	-1.0	-1.6	-3.8
Underlying cash balance	-0.6	-0.6	-1.0	-1.6	-3.8

(a) A positive number represents an increase in the relevant budget balance; a negative number represents a decrease.

(b) PDI impacts are not included in the totals.

Key assumptions and methodology

The proposal is capped at a fixed amount, distributed over 4 years from the commencement date as specified. Departmental expenses were estimated based on the cost of administering similar programs and are included within the capped funding amount. Administered expenses are as specified in the

proposal, less expected departmental expenses. We assume that no funds allocated to a given year are left unspent.

Financial implications were rounded consistent with the PBO's rounding rules.¹

Data sources

Commonwealth of Australia (2025) *Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2025*, Commonwealth of Australia.

Departmental expenses were informed by similar measures in the Commonwealth budgets from 2015-16 to 2021-22.

¹ <https://www.pbo.gov.au/for-parliamentarians/how-we-analyse/pbo-rounding-rules>

Attachment A – Ready to Read program – Financial implications

Table A1: Ready to Read program – Fiscal and underlying cash balances (\$m)^(a)

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36	Total to 2028-29	Total to 2035-36
Expenses													
Total – administered	-0.6	-0.6	-0.9	-1.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-3.6	-3.6
Total – departmental	-0.1	-0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.2	-0.2
Total (excluding PDI)	-0.6	-0.6	-1.0	-1.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-3.8	-3.8

- (a) A positive number for the fiscal balance indicates an increase in revenue or a decrease in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A negative number for the fiscal balance indicates a decrease in revenue or an increase in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A positive number for the underlying cash balance indicates an increase in receipts or a decrease in payments or net capital investment in cash terms. A negative number for the underlying cash balance indicates a decrease in receipts or an increase in payments or net capital investment in cash terms.
- .. Not zero but rounded to zero.
- Indicates nil.

Table A2: Ready to Read program – Memorandum item: Public Debt Interest (PDI) impacts – Fiscal and underlying cash balances (\$m)^{(a)(b)}

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36	Total to 2028-29	Total to 2035-36
Fiscal balance	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-1.6
Underlying cash balance	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-1.6

- (a) As this table is presented as a memorandum item, these figures are not reflected in the totals above. This is consistent with the approach taken in the budget where the budget impact of most measures is presented excluding the impact on PDI. If the reader would like a complete picture of the total aggregate, then these figures would need to be added to the figures above. For further information on government borrowing and financing please refer to the PBO's online budget glossary.²
- (b) A positive number for the fiscal balance indicates an increase in revenue or a decrease in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A negative number for the fiscal balance indicates a decrease in revenue or an increase in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A positive number for the underlying cash balance indicates an increase in receipts or a decrease in payments or net capital investment in cash terms. A negative number for the underlying cash balance indicates a decrease in receipts or an increase in payments or net capital investment in cash terms.
- .. Not zero but rounded to zero.

² [Online budget glossary – Parliamentary Budget Office \(pbo.gov.au\)](https://pbo.gov.au)