THE CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA
NSW BRANCH

Kids Corner
March 2026

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Cover illustration © by Helen Milroy from Mr Majestic

Notables and "the News"
Individuals and Images
Bookweek and Beginnings

WELCOME to KIDS' CORNER for March/April 2026 . . .

where EVERY book is *NOTABLE*!



In this issue of **KC :**

BITS of BOOK WEEK give us ideas to get us all reading and thinking about aspects of story…

-We discover that many of the NOTABLE books are ***NOTABLY NSW*** in origin.

-Some of ***'THE NEWS "*** (i.e. new books) are suited to readers of different ages, and many help us understand and talk about difficult issues.

-Readers discover how authors and Illustrators help share books, characters and situations, and surprises and ***individual differences*** that shape our worlds.

-STORIES ARE FOR SHARING.

- Our Guest Illustrator, Helen Milroy,

invites us to join her in being ***surrounded by special stories***.

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Welcome to our Guest Illustrator

HELEN MILROY

https://www.helenmilroy.com/

who invites us to join her in being

SURROUNDED BY STORIES

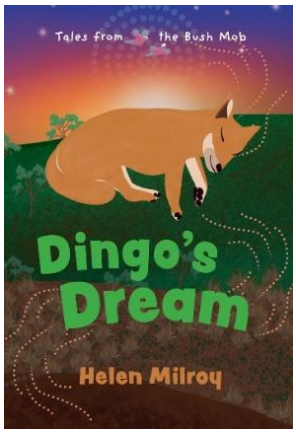


Helen creates remarkable visual and language images of ancient times and connections with Country. Her use of vibrant colours and unique designs brings to life stories about the power of community and working together. Growing up in a family that shared a sense of storytelling seems to have given Helen a background to share a constant stream of ideas for new stories.



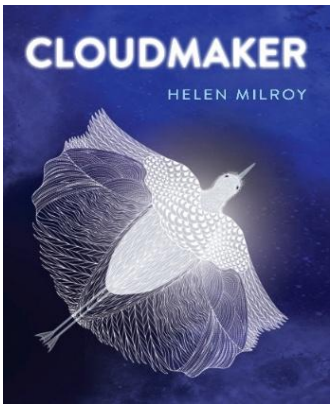
I love writing and illustrating children's stories. I grew up on stories from my mum and grandmother. As kids, we were always telling, drawing, or performing stories. Aboriginal storytelling has some unique characteristics - such as everything being alive and in relationship. This means you can talk to the moon or dance with the stars.

It was quite some time, though, before my first children's book was published. But since then, I have had a constant stream of ideas for new stories.



My two latest books from Magabala are ***Dingo's Dream*** and ***Cloudmaker***. Although both were an absolute treat to write, I did shed a few tears along the way. The good thing is they also gave me great joy, especially as I brought them to life with the images.

Dingo is a wonderful character as he is so caring for his community and learns a lot about himself in the story.



Cloudmaker, on the other hand, is an ancestral being looking for his final legacy. Both have important jobs to do.

Dingo ultimately learns the importance of connection to country.

Cloudmaker leaves the world the gift of eternal hope through his rainbows.



Artwork by Helen Milroy

I love being surrounded by stories. I put this image together for a festival showcasing some of the many stories I have written and how they can surround you in hope and resilience. The images also signify how I like to write with stories about our connection to birds, animals, and the environment, including water, land, sky, and country, as well as our relationship to spirit and our ancestors. Being a storyteller brings with it the opportunity to grow a child's imagination and create the magic of possibility.

In terms of how I create the works, sometimes it begins with an idea and sometimes with an image. Either way, I want the reader to be able to read the story through the words or from the illustrations. I think there are messages for adults and kids in most of my books.

I used to paint, but I have moved on to using digital art, so I don't have to wait for the paint to dry. It lets me explore every colour in the world. I take the iPad everywhere now instead of a sketchbook and pencil case.

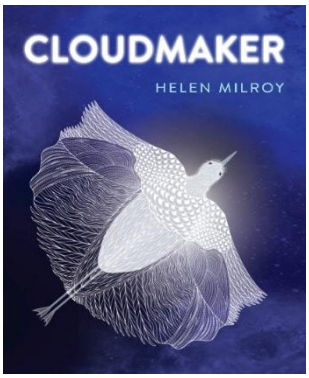
The biggest influences on my work have been my culture and family. This has framed how I understand the world from an ecological perspective, where we are in relationship with everything around us, the birds, sky, and land, for example.



I have worked with many children, and I still believe stories are the best way to instil hope, insight, and resilience, as well as having some fun and joy along the way.

The cover illustration is *Mr Majestic*. He is a magnificent cat and doesn't he know it! This is a sneak preview for all the cat lovers who adore being at the whim and behest of their most loved pet.

Helen's recent books connect us to ancient worlds and traditional tales of connecting with "Country", friendships, and community. Helen's latest books include:



CLOUDMAKER

(Magabala Books)
by Helen Milroy https://www.helenmilroy.com/

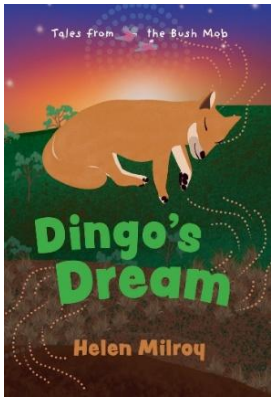
"Long ago, Cloudmaker was busy preparing for the creation of worlds.

As an ancestral being, he had an important job to do - to create and tend all the clouds in the sky. He made sure there were enough clouds for shade, rain and light."

When he came to realise that he had made all the clouds that were needed, his lightness of being became heavier and heavier until he sank to the Earth. Here, the birds lifted his spirits, and he floated up and joined his favourite cloud and friend, Cirra.

His tears of sadness and joy landed on the tip of his wing, creating a rainbow that encircled the whole of Earth. He would live on forever in the rainbow

.His sense of purpose became bringing ancient worlds and stories together to make a new future full of wonder, with enough clouds for "shade, for rain, for lightning, for fun to make the new world flourish " [summary with thanks to Magabala Books.]



DINGO'S DREAM

(Magabala Books) https://www.magabala.com/products/dingos-dream
by Helen Milroy https://www.helenmilroy.com/
Dingo's Dream is part of Helen's **Tales from the Bush Mob series** [Magabala Books) about a group of animals including Dingo, Willy-willy Wagtail, Eagle, Platypus, Koala, Wombat, Kookaburra, Echidna and Kangaroo. These stories emphasise the value of respect for First Nations culture, history, and country, as well as the importance of courage, individuality, friendships and histories that bind communities.[adapted with thanks from Magabala Books]

Find out more about Helen's books with thanks to:

Magabala Books https://www.magabala.com/collections/helen-milroy/

Fremantle Press https://fremantlepress.com.au/contributor/helen-milroy/

Helen Milroy Children's Books https://www.helenmilroy.com/backyard-birds

And watch for Helen's remarkable story of *Mr Majestic* (from Magabala Books) – a newer-than-new book in the making...

BITS of BOOK WEEK – Now is the perfect time to find out more about books that have started the current Book Week journey and others that are new within the past year. Remember, ANY book that you haven't read yet is NEW to YOU!

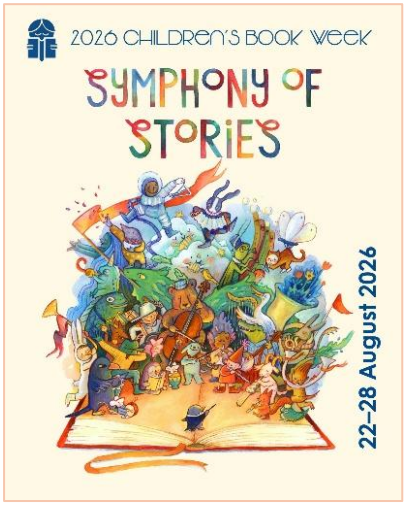


Image created by Briony Stewart with CBCA

:: BITS OF 2026 BOOK WEEK :: THEME :

The CBCA 2026 CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK® THEME is:

'SYMPHONY OF STORIES'

with illustrations created by

Briony Stewart https://www.brionystewart.com/

the award-winning author-illustrator of '***Gymnastica Fantastica***' and other children's books. Just wait until you meet all the wild characters and images she has created.

Watch the **THEME ANNOUNCEMENT** **https://youtu.be/wz-psnQnUmQ**
AND
Discover the **ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE 2026 CBCA NOTABLES:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MT4xXmxNr04
AND … Celebrate the Short-listed books link

CBCA Children's Book Week® will run from
Saturday, 22 August to Friday, 28 August 2026.



:: BITS OF 2026 BOOK WEEK :: *NOTABLES and NOTABLY NSW*



The **CBCA NOTABLES** list is chosen from some of the best books published during the year. They meet specific criteria as set out by **the BOYA = CBCA Books of the Year Award.**

New South Wales often compiles a separate and unofficial listing called **NOTABLY NSW** books. These are the books that were created by authors and/or illustrators who have links to NSW and whose books are on the **CBCA NOTABLES** list. We are happy to share the Notably NSW listings through **KIDS' CORNER**.

The Notably NSW logo is based on the waratah, the NSW State flower emblem.



BITS OF 2026 BOOK WEEK : *BOYA is About Everything*



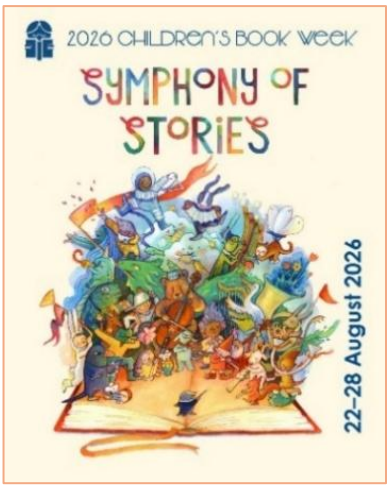


Image created by Briony Stewart with CBCA

BOYA = BOOK of the YEAR AWARDS

TOPICS - Some of the great CBCA BOYA books to watch for this year are about all kinds of topics, stories and presentations.

You will find books about EVERYTHING…

from playful absurdity and laugh-out-loud humour to stories that explore grief, resilience, belonging and identity. These books meet young readers where they are – and invite them to think, feel and imagine more deeply. Family, friendship and intergenerational connection feature strongly, alongside powerful explorations of culture, Country and place. Environmental awareness, self-expression and the courage to find one's voice resonate across the list, and more.

[with thanks to CBCA https://cbca.org.au/2026-notables/]

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KC4KC = KIDS' COMMENTS for KIDS' CORNER

KIDS' CORNER is always happy to hear your ideas about Reading, Writing, Thinking, Imagining, Creating and more.

THANKS to the reading teams from

MLC SCHOOL & WILEY PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL for sharing their ideas.

KC4KC - KC4KC - KC4KC - KC4KC - KC4KC - KC4KC - KC4KC - KC4KCKC4KC

NOTES ABOUT the NOTABLES::

CATEGORIES :: CRITERIA :: and :: NOTABLY NSW ::



2026 Notable category posters + list https://cbca.org.au/2026-notables/]

OLDER READERS :: *Criteria includes . . . Readers require a degree of maturity to appreciate the themes and scope of emotional involvement.*

NOTABLY NSW

Drift, (Lothian Children's Books) by **Pip Harry** [Northern Beaches - Sydney, NSW]

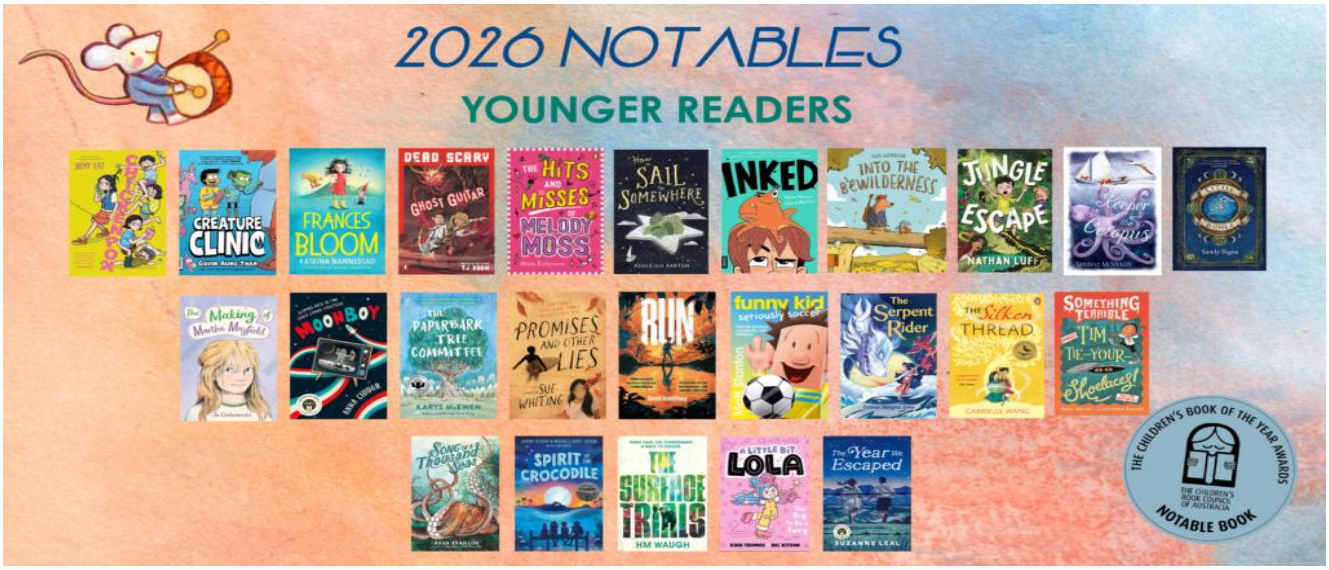
Golden (Text Publishing) by **Jade Timms** [NSW South Coast]

The Pull of the Moon **(**UWA Publishing) by **Pip Smith** [Sydney]

KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

The book's pages were pure white, its cover was happy and bright,
The book was about a story so great,
The moment I saw it, it was my best mate.

~Sally - MLC School Burwood~



]2026 Notable category posters + list https://cbca.org.au/2026-notables/]

YOUNGER READERS:: *Criteria includes. . . books published for children in the age range from 7 to 12 years (lower to upper primary school level)*

NOTABLY NSW

How to Sail to Somewhere (Lothian Children's Books) **Ashleigh Barton** [Sydney]

Into the Bewilderness (Figment Books) **Gus Gordon** [Northern Beaches - Sydney, NSW]

Jungle Escape (Walker Books Australia) by **Nathan Luff** [Yass and Sydney NSW]

Little Bones, (University of Queensland Press) by **Sandy Bigna** [Canberra, ACT] illustrated by **Tamlyn Teow** [Western Sydney]

Promises and Other Lies (Walker Books Australia) by **Sue Whiting** [Illawarra/ Shoalhaven]

Run (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing) by **Sarah Armstrong** [Byron Bay, NSW]

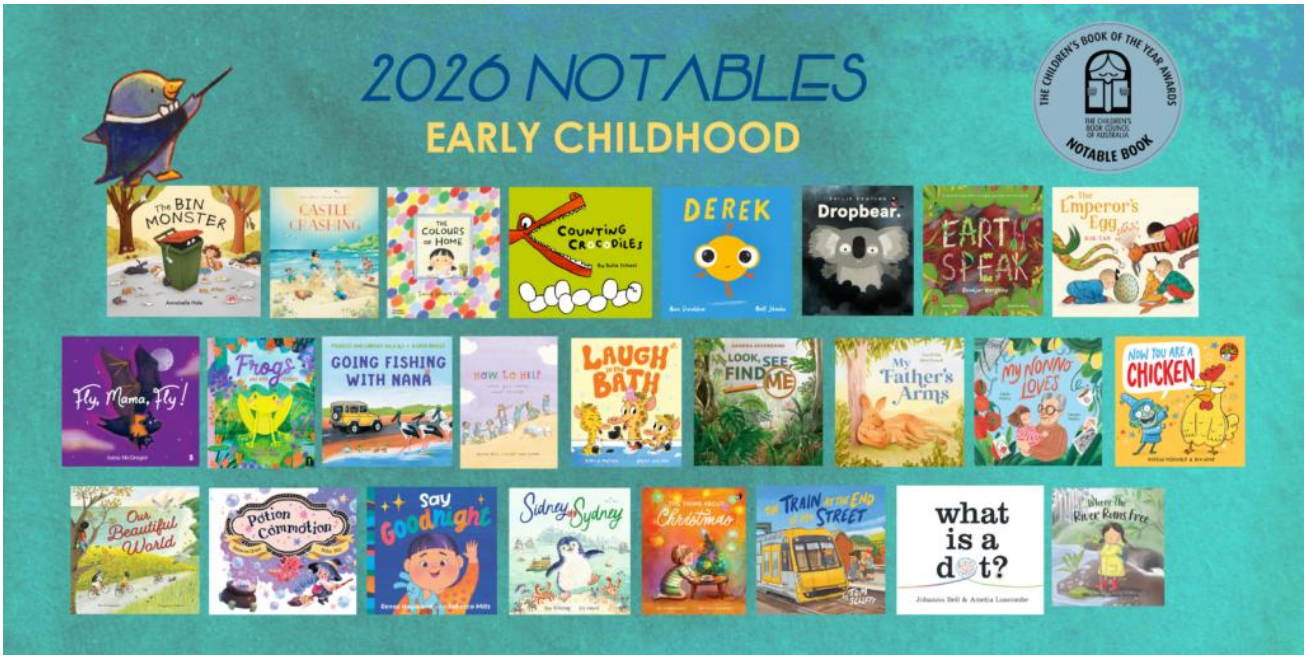
Seriously Soccer (ABC Books) by **Matt Stanton** [Sydney, NSW]

The Serpent Rider**,** (Bloomsbury Children's Books) by **Yxavel Magno Diño** [Sydney, NSW]

Something Terrible: Tim Tie-Your-Shoelaces, (Walker Books Australia) by **Sally Barton** [WA] illustrated by **Christopher Nielsen** [Sydney, NSW]

Song of a Thousand Seas (University of Queensland Press) by **Zana Fraillon** [Melbourne, Vic] illustrated by **Aviva Reed** [North Coast NSW]

The Year We Escaped (Angus & Robertson) by **Suzanne Leal** [Sydney, NSW]



2026 Notable category posters + list https://cbca.org.au/2026-notables/]

EARLY CHILDHOOD :: *Criteria includes . . . suitable in content and style for pre and beginning readers for children in the age range 0 to 6 years (pre-school and infant level)*

NOTABLY NSW

Castle Crashing (Little Hare) by **Andrea Rowe** (Mornington Peninsula, Vic], illustrated by **Hannah Sommerville** [NSW South Coast]

Earthspeak *(Allen* & Unwin) by **Sean McCann** [Gadigal Country/ Dharawal Land /Sydney], illustrated by **Jade Goodwin** [Hunter Valley]

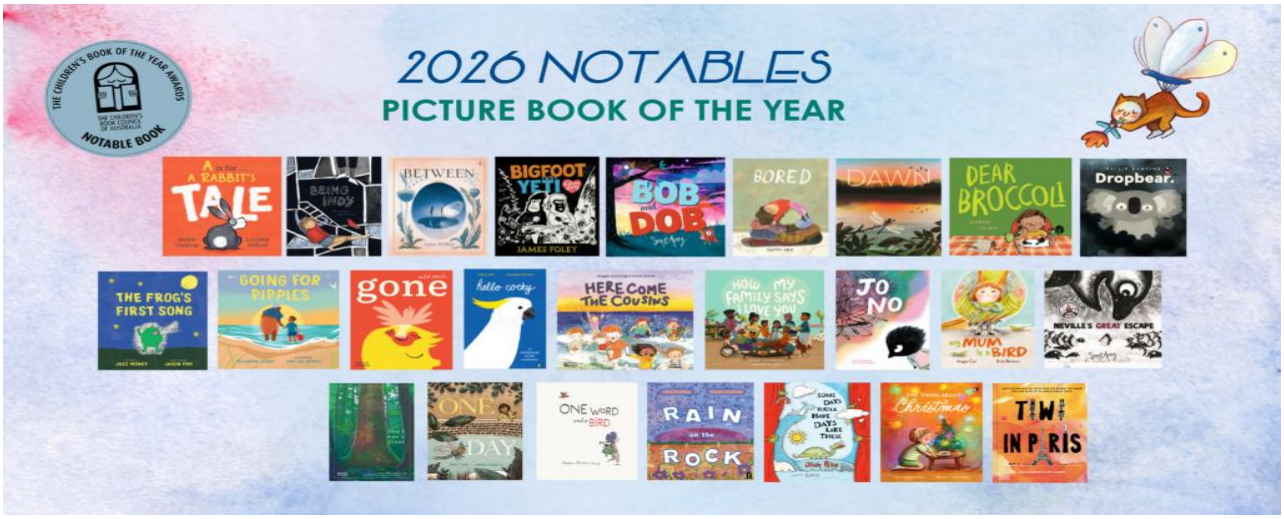
Frogs Are Our Friends (Bright Light) by **Toni D'Alia [ ], Madeline White** [Northern Rivers NSW]

Laugh in the Bath (Little Book Press) by **Rory H. Mather** [Toowoomba, Qld] illustrated by **Brent Wilson** [Sydney, NSW

Our Beautiful World (New Frontier Publishing) by **Sarah Speedie** [Melbourne, Vic], illustrated by **Margeaux Davis** [Far North Coast NSW]

Sidney of Sydney (Walker Books Australia) by **Sue Whiting** [Illawarra/ Shoalhaven], illustrated by **Liz Anelli** [UK/ NSW]

The Train at the End of My Street (Affirm Press) **Tom Jellett** [Sydney]



2026 Notable category posters + list https://cbca.org.au/2026-notables/]

PICTURE BOOK OF THE YEAR :: *Criteria includes . . . illustrations are an integral part of or extend the meaning on the page. The age range for this category is 0 to 18 years*

NOTABLY NSW

Being Indy (WestWords Children's) by **Estee Sarsfield**, Illustrator [the Blue Mountains on unceded Dharug and Gundungurra land], text by **Zoe Gaetjens** [Dharug Country]

Dear Broccoli (Affirm Press) by **Cate James Illustrator** [Northern Beaches- Sydney, NSW] text by **Jo Dabrowski]** [Melbourne]

The Frog's First Song, (University of Queensland Press) by **Jason Phu**, Illustrator {Sydney]. text by **Jazz Money** [Gadigal Country, Sydney]

Going For Pippies (Magabala Books) Wilaaran Laurie [Central Coast, NSW].

Gone (Thames and Hudson Australia) by **Michel Streich** [Blue Mountains].

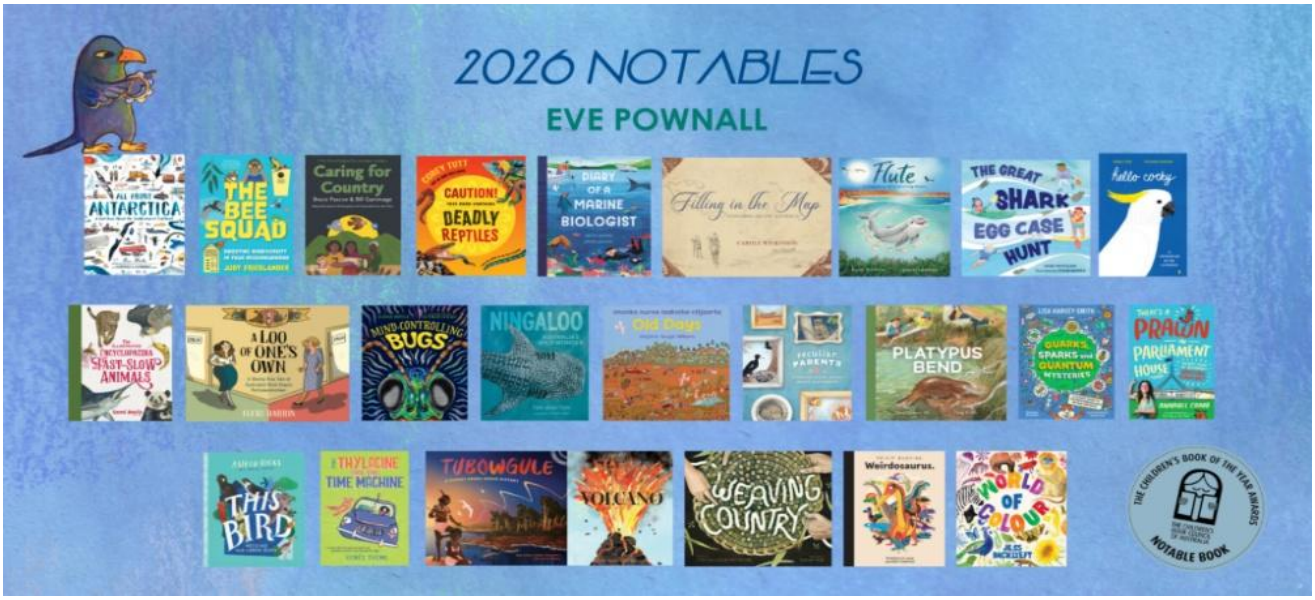
Hello Cocky**,** (Scribble).by **Antonia Pesenti**, Illustrator [Sydney]. text by **Hilary Bell** [Sydney].

Here Come the Cousins (Thames and Hudson Australia).by Sarah Zweck [Melbourne] text by **Maggie Hutchings** [Northern NSW]

How My Family Says I Love You **(**Walker Books Australia). **Aurore McLeod,** Illustrator [Tasmania] text by **Yvonne Sewankambo** [Sydney]

One Word and a Bird (Scholastic Press). by **Stephen Michael King** [Hawkesbury River].

Some Days You'll Have Days Like These (Scholastic Press). **By Stephen Michael King** [Hawkesbury] and text by **Josh Pyke** [Sydney]



2026 Notable category posters + list https://cbca.org.au/2026-notables/]

EVE POWNALL AWARD :: *Criteria includes . . . introduce or extend awareness and knowledge on a given topic. Consideration should be given to imaginative presentation and variation of style.*

NOTABLY NSW

The Bee Squad: Boosting Biodiversity in Your Neighbourhood (NewSouth) by **Judy Friedlander** [Sydney].

Caring for Country: First Knowledges for Younger *Readers* (Thames and Hudson Australia) by **Bruce Pascoe** [Vic], **Bill Gammage [**Wagga Wagga, NSW], **Jasmin** McGaughey [Qld] and **Savi Ross** [Narrm Melbourne].

Caution! This Book Contains Deadly Reptiles (Allen & Unwin) **by Corey Tutt** [Port Macquarie, NSW] and **Ben Williams** [Barkly region of the Northern Territory]**.**

Flute: A Dolphin's Wild Journey Home**,** (Wombat Books**) Kasey Whitelaw** [Perth], **Jenni Goodman** [NSW Coast].

Hello Cocky (Scribble) by **Hilary Bell** [Sydney**],** illustrated by **Antonia Pesenti** [Sydney].

The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Fast and Slow Animals *(*Lothian Children's Books) by **Sami Bayly** [Newcastle, NSW]**.**

Mind-controlling Bugs **(**Hardie Grant Explore) by **Aidan Doyle, illustrated by Astred Hicks** [Sydney].

Quarks, Sparks and Quantum Mysteries (Thames and Hudson Australia) by **Lisa Harvey-Smith** [Sydney] and **Aidan Ryan** [Naarm/Melbourne].

There's a Prawn in Parliament House: The Kids' Guide to Australia's Amazing Democracy, (Allen & Unwin) by **Annabelle Crabb**, [Sydney] illustrated by **First Dog on the Moon.**

This Bird: Noticing Our Urban Birds (CSIRO Publishing) by **Astred Hicks [Sydney]** and **Holly Parsons.**

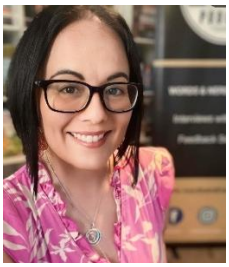
Tubowgule (Lothian Children's Books) **by Melissa-Jane Fogarty** [Central Coast, NSW] and **Dylan Finney** [Central Coast, NSW].

KINDNESS CORNER

CARING & KINDNESS:: BEING DIFFERENT

"Neurodiversity"

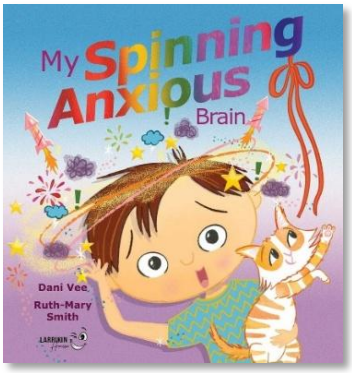
Every person has their own way of thinking …

 **DANI VEE**	 **RUTH-MARY SMITH**	 **JAMES LAYTON**

*MY SPINNING ANXIOUS BRAIN

(Larrikin House)
https://larrikinhouse.com.au/products/my-spinning-anxious-brain?_pos=1&_psq=spinning&_ss=e&_v=1.0

by **Dani Vee** https://danivee.com.au/
with **Ruth-Mary Smith, Illustrator**
https://ruth-marysmith.com/





DANI - MY SPINNING ANXIOUS BRAIN

https://danivee.com.au/

-Why do our brains "get stuck" thinking about problems or situations that aren't really all that likely to happen?

People with anxiety often feel nervous about the future due to a fear of uncertainty. Anxious brains need certainty and reassurance. Often the *'what if'* can be overwhelming and debilitating.

- Why do people show they are anxious in different ways?

People with anxiety share common experiences, but what they worry about is a mix of genetics, brain chemistry, personality and personal experiences. For me, anxiety often manifests as uncertainty about the future and concern for others' well-being.

It's a personal and individual experience. Even my anxiety can manifest in different ways depending on the situation. Sometimes, it manifests as insomnia, a feeling of nerves, a tightness in the chest or an upset stomach. Sometimes, it results in a full-blown panic attack where you experience an intense feeling of anxiety.

- How can you tell if someone is feeling worried? What can we do to help others who may feel anxious?

Everyone will show or mask their anxiety in different ways. For me, it's about having a safe person in whom I can confide when I'm feeling anxious. It's important to have honest conversations with our family and friends so people feel comfortable being vulnerable. If someone you know is feeling anxious or having a panic attack, listen to them, help them focus on their breathing and tell them that although you can't make their anxiety disappear, you will stay with them and ensure they are safe.

- What hints do you have to make ways of dealing with being worried more effective?

In the book, we explore having a safe person to go to when you're feeling anxious. Activities like yoga, meditation, a focus on breathing, and writing help calm and distract an anxious brain.

-Why does writing or talking with someone make us feel less anxious?

From my experience, owning your anxiety and being honest about it has helped me feel like I have more power over it. It's okay to tell people what you need from them when you're feeling anxious. If someone doesn't regularly experience anxiety, they may not understand your needs.

-How do you think decisions you made about the use of language and visual imagery will help people understand concerns about anxiety?

It was important for me to normalise anxiety, to include strategies while also showing children what anxiety truly feels like. Most importantly, I wanted to show that people with anxiety are also resilient and courageous, and that there is always a way out of that dreaded feeling!

- Other?

Normalising conversations about mental health is so important for our children! **~DANI ~**



RUTH-MARY SMITH - MY SPINNING ANXIOUS BRAIN

https://ruth-marysmith.com/

-Why do our brains "get stuck" thinking about problems or situations that aren't really all that likely to happen?

Our brains are designed to keep us safe. Sometimes that safety system becomes overactive and treats everyday situations as if they are dangers. The thinking can become a loop that continues even when there isn't a real threat.

-Why do people get anxious about different concerns? Why do people show they are anxious in different ways?



Everyone's experiences and sensitivities are different. This is just the way we are made. One person may worry about friendships, another about change. This anxiety can come out in different ways as well, such as quiet withdrawal, irritability, restlessness, or avoiding situations. It isn't one-size-fits-all.

-How can you tell if someone is feeling worried? What can we do to help others who may feel anxious?

Changes in behaviour are often the clue to seeing others' anxiety. This can be seen in behaviour such as avoiding tasks, becoming unusually upset, or needing constant reassurance. Being calm, setting predictable routines and listening without rushing to fix things can help children feel safe again.

-What hints do you have to make ways of dealing with being worried more effective?

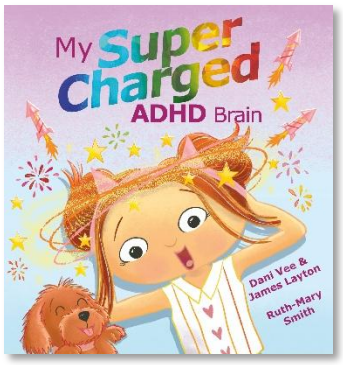
Simple tools work best: slow breathing, movement breaks, and breaking challenges into manageable parts. Practising these when calm makes them easier to use when worry appears.

- Why does writing or talking with someone make us feel less anxious?

Putting thoughts into words helps organise them. It shifts the worry from something swirling inside to something we can see, share, and manage.

-How do you think the decisions you made about the use of language and visual imagery will help people understand concerns about anxiety?

I used swirling images to depict how worries can grow and shrink. The story is positive and supportive, making an invisible experience easier to recognise and talk about. **~Ruth-Mary ~**



*MY SUPER CHARGED ADHD BRAIN

(Larrikin House – www.larrikinhouse.com.au)

by **Dani Vee** https://danivee.com.au/

James Layton https://larrikinhouse.com.au/pages/about-larrikin-publishers

and

Ruth-Mary Smith https://ruth-marysmith.com/

Behind the scenes https://ruth-marysmith.com/blog/my-supercharged-adhd-brain-picture-book



DANI - My SUPER CHARGED ADHD BRAIN

https://danivee.com.au/

-What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition characterised by inattention, hyperactivity and or impulsivity. My research shows that women and girls are constantly underdiagnosed for various reasons. Therefore, the female protagonist was a deliberate choice. Also look out for ***Archie Can't Sit Still*** (2026), which explores the hyperactivity of ADHD with a male protagonist.

- What are some of the good things about having a "busy brain?"

From my experience, it allows me to do and achieve many things because I have a huge capacity for getting things done! It means I constantly have ideas bubbling inside my brain. I'm a good problem solver, a good friend, and of course, people with ADHD have a reputation for being a lot of fun!

- What hints could help people stay focused so ideas can develop "properly?

Unfortunately, boredom is our kryptonite, so we'll only be truly engaged in something if we love it. When I'm hyper-focused on something, I am obsessed with it, and it's all I want to do. A deadline helps, but it must be a short one. If you give me an hour, I'll do a day's work. If you give me a week, I'll forget about it!

- What ideas have you had that no one else has thought of?

This neurodivergent series! I pitched a neurodivergent series written by own voices to James, years ago and was finally given the green light! ***My SPINNING Anxious Brain*** is out in April 2026, and Kate Foster's **My WONDROUS Autistic Brain** is about to go into production! The special aspect of these books is that they focus not only on the challenges of having a neurodivergent brain, but they also celebrate the positive, joyful, fun and amazing things our neurodivergent brains can do!

- What choices about language and visual imagery helped you "discuss" ADHD in the book?
It was important to have an authentic, own voice story with a childlike but positive tone, so children felt celebrated. I didn't avoid the hard parts of ADHD, but it is a celebration of difference. The character needed to be adorable and written in the first person so readers engage with the character and empathise with her.

- How do you think the book will help kids affected by ADHD?
Larrikin House is committed to ensuring kids see themselves in books. We want kids to love who they are, celebrate their differences and understand that it's okay to be different. Every time I go into a school, I get messages from parents and teachers all commenting on how much it has helped their child see themselves in a positive light. I wish I had this book when I was a kid!

Other? This series is so important, but also very joyful. I hope it captures the joy that all kids have inside them! **~DANI**



RUTH-MARY Smith –
My SUPER - CHARGED ADHD BRAIN

https://ruth-marysmith.com/

I am submitting my answers as an illustrator, the mum of children with ADHD as well as a Learning Support Teacher ~RUTH-MARY

-So, what is ADHD?

ADHD is a difference in how the brain manages attention, energy, and regulation. It's not about a lack of ability or effort. It's a difference that needs understanding, not fixing.

-What are some of the good things about having a "busy brain?"
As a mum of children with ADHD, I see that a busy brain can be imaginative and full of ideas. They can notice details others miss, and approach problems creatively. Often, my children bring enthusiasm, humour, and originality into a space. When supported well, that energy becomes a real strength rather than a difficulty.

-What hints could help people stay focused so ideas can develop "properly?
There are lots of ways to help children with their ideas – and focus! Breaking tasks into smaller steps, using visual reminders, moving the body between activities, and having predictable routines can make a big difference.

-What ideas have you had that no one else has thought of?
Well, I don't have ADHD, but I do remember one of my daughters made a very creative spider's web from wool and blue tack just outside our pantry to keep away bugs. We left it hanging in the kitchen for about a month. And guess what? There were no bugs!

What choices about language and visual imagery helped you "discuss" ADHD in the book?
Our book aimed to show the positive aspects of ADHD. As an illustrator, I had a large role in this, so I used colours and patterns to show thoughts racing, swirling, and expanding, helping readers see what is usually unseen by others.

-How do you think the book will help kids affected by ADHD?
I hope children recognise themselves in the story and feel less alone. I also hope that they see the very creative side of their brain. The book also opens conversations between children, families, and teachers, helping adults respond with empathy, and a clearer understanding of how these minds work. **~ Ruth Mary**

KINDNESS CORNER

CARING & KINDNESS:: BEING DIFFERENT

"Neurodiversity"

People's brains can work in different ways …

The UMBRELLA

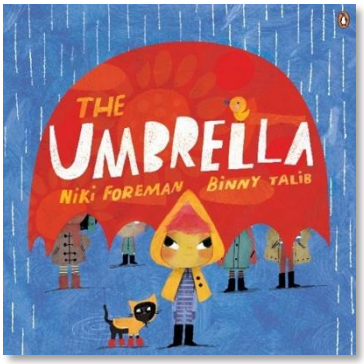
(Penguin Books)

https://www.penguin.com.au/books/the-umbrella-9781761348242

by

Niki FOREMAN https://www.penguin.com.au/authors/niki-foreman

and Binny TALIB https://www.binny.com.au/



BINNY - So, what is neurodiversity? (a disability? a difference? other?)

BINNY - Neurodiversity means that **people's brains can work in different ways**. Some people might think, learn, focus, or experience the world a little differently. Sometimes those differences can make things tricky in places like school, but they can also come with wonderful strengths like creativity, unique ideas, and noticing things other people miss. It's really about understanding that there isn't just one "right" kind of brain.



What's the best part about being different?

BINNY - Being "different" means you bring something new to the world that nobody else can bring. Different ideas, different ways of solving problems, different kinds of imagination. If everyone were the same, the world would be a much less interesting place!
In the book, the neurodivergent characters (or simply the children who don't feel like they fit in) are shown in bright raincoats and vivid colours. Meanwhile, the "mainstream" group all share similar muted tones. It's a visual technique showing a difference.

These children also cast unique, patterned shadows, a nod to how they see life differently. And where they stand, the rain becomes multi-coloured, their world is bright, vivid, and uniquely theirs. It can be very positive to be different, but also sometimes that means not fitting in with the crowd.

Is there an image (verbal or visual) in the story that you identify with?

BINNY: I know many people in my life standing just outside the umbrella. I think many, kids and adults have had a moment where they felt a bit on the outside looking in. But I love that the story doesn't end there. Instead, the character finds joy and friendship somewhere else, under a rainbow, which feels hopeful and freeing.

If you were a character in the book, what would you like to happen next?

BINNY : If I was one of the characters in the book that wasn't fitting in under the umbrella, I'd like to play with my new friends I'd connected with the next day too!

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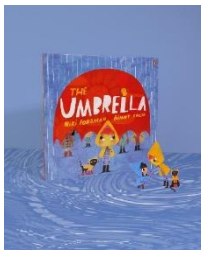
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BINNY: If I were one of the characters in the book that wasn't fitting in under the umbrella, I'd like to play with my new friends I'd connected with the next day too!

Other comments?

BINNY: A big inspiration for me was my love of retro picture books. They have such a warm, safe, nostalgic feeling, and there's a timeless simplicity to them that I really wanted to capture in this story. I wanted the illustrations to feel warm and cosy so that opening the book feels a bit like receiving a warm hug.

I hope this story helps children feel seen and understood. Everyone deserves to feel like they belong. And sometimes the smallest gestures to include someone can make the biggest difference.





Niki & Binny

NIKI :: Why an umbrella?

Even though there is no mention of umbrellas in the words of the story, the title of this book has always been *The Umbrella*. It is the picture I had in my mind when I wrote the story, and it is what causes problems for the characters in the story.

For the children under the umbrella, even though it protects them from the rain, it also stops them from seeing things that are on the outside of the umbrella. For the characters on the outside, the small space under the umbrella means they are left out in the rain, and they are feeling left out.



When we think about an umbrella, we often think about how it protects us from the weather. But it also keeps us isolated and apart from each other. It is a barrier between the people under it and the weather, but it is also a barrier between the people under it and those who aren't.

There are already many stories about finding your place, about finding where you belong, and where you fit. But I wondered if there was another way. if the world didn't ask us to "fit" in the first place . . . And so, I wrote *The Umbrella.*

If we remove the thing that we're all trying to fit into, would that open the world up a bit more for *everyone*? In this story, the barrier to everyone being included is the umbrella. Removing the umbrella means that everyone is able to come together as themselves. Those inside the umbrella find a world of rainbow beauty outside of it. And those outside the umbrella are no longer different and "other". All the different groups come together, with all their differences, to be an "us".



Neurodivergence

NIKI- In the blurb on the back of the book, there's a line that mentions this book was written by a parent with experience of neurodivergence. (That's me, by the way!) Neurodivergence is a big word. Often, people say it describes a difference in the way a person thinks or functions. That's true, but it misses the point. The point is that to be *different*, there needs to be a *normal*. And so, if there is neurodivergence, there is also neuronormativity. (Another big word, which is basically the word *normal* with *neuro* attached to it.). But if people are all naturally different and unique, then perhaps that "normal" umbrella we all try to fit under is wrong for everyone. A world without those metaphorical umbrellas is what neuro*diversity* is all about. Neurodiversity recognises that being different is basically what it is to be human.

Is there an image (verbal or visual) in the story that you relate to?

NIKI: This beautiful illustration of Binny's is the story in a nutshell. It is people living their lives under different umbrellas – with some living outside of them, no matter how hard they might try to fit in with those under them. Those umbrellas represent labels that come from that idea of "normal" or "neuronormativity".



The people under the main umbrella might be labelled "normal", and those under the other umbrella might be labelled "weird" or "overly sensitive" or "quirky". They might be diagnosed by a doctor, such as with autism or dyslexia. But are those labels necessary? Does everyone need to fit under an umbrella? The child in the yellow has tried their very best to fit in under the different umbrellas, but none feel right to them. How do you think they are feeling in this picture?



When someone is left out, it isn't necessarily because anyone is doing anything wrong. But when the world is set up to reward those who *can* fit, it leaves out those who can't. In that picture, no one is meaning to leave them out, but no one knows how to include them in a way that is right for the character in yellow. Removing the umbrellas changes that, as beautifully shown by Binny at the end of the book:

What is the best part of being different?



NIKI - This is a difficult question. For me, being different has always kept me on the outside of things, and that was very lonely. I've spent most of my life pretending not to be different so that I could fit in with what everyone else was doing and not feel lonely. The problem with pretending, though, is that it is exhausting. So, the best thing for me about being different, is when I find someone else who is different, we can be different together, without pretending… Just like these two characters here.

If you were a character in the book, what would you like to happen next?

NIKI - Oooh, this is a GREAT question. If I were a character in the book, I would want to let my new friends know how much meeting them meant to me, and how much I enjoyed being a part of that rainbow playtime.

I like to tell people how much they mean to me so that they know. I spend my life worrying that I might have done something wrong or upset people, even when I haven't, and so I like to make sure people know that I enjoyed spending time with them – just in case they're a worrier like me, then that's one less thing for them to worry about. Hopefully, we can then get together again. And so in this story, I would hope that the umbrellas were ditched more often, that those "normal" and "different" labels were dropped in favour of diversity, so that we could be ourselves without trying to fit into something, and we could dance under rainbows with *everyone* all the time.-NIKI



KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

Book pages are like little love notes to everyone.
~Inneke - MLC School Burwood~

KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

When I read books, I get sucked into the imagination of the world.
~Ayla- MLC School Burwood~

KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

Why are you a "Reader"?

I am a reader because I enjoy learning new things and experiencing different stories. Reading helps me relax, but it also helps me understand other people's perspectives and ideas.
~ Sunaira - Wiley Park PS~

“The News ” - DIFFICULT TOPICS and YA

Some of ‘THE NEWS “ (i.e. new books) are suited to readers of different ages and may help us understand and talk about difficult issues. Some books written for YA=Young Adults and others can include situations and characters that can be confronting. Authors create their stories carefully. Sometimes, talking with others about stories and life can help when the world seems complicated. You may also want to contact:

-REACH OUT : https://au.reachout/
On-line mental health support for young people

RUOK : https://www.ruok.org.au/
Includes suggestions of how to ask friends and others ”Are you okay?”



The BELLY OF A WOLF

(UWA Publishing)

https://uwap.uwa.edu.au/products/the-belly-of-a-wolf?srsltid=AfmBOoqLMoG5RS-tk9PjpRZsET2wOzJPkAo2G_U6krOw28uJ1CDi5wE8

by JULIANNE NEGRI

https://www.juliannenegri.com/



-Basic overview/ summary...

The Belly of a Wolf is a verse novel about the devastating impact of teenage suicide. It asks the question: *How can you grow up with grief pulling you down?* Fifteen-year-old Red, returns to school six months after her best friend Wolf has died.
Red navigates a series of firsts, propelling her forward, while grieving pulls her back to Wolf and the past. Red is drawn to art and music to express herself. She makes a tentative new friend, Music Girl, and begins her first love relationship with an ill-suited Popular Boy. Can she try on new identities while being loyal to Wolf? Can you ever recast yourself in your own story?

-Why did a "verse novel" approach work for this book?

The book began when poems about my time as a teenager bubbled up inside me. When you have experienced a traumatic event, your brain keeps you tethered to that moment. I found it was easy to be back there, fifteen years old, grieving my best friend. So, poetry was a form that could express the messiness of emotions. When creating the novel, the form seemed a natural fit for the intense and introspective voice.

-What do you like about writing?

Sometimes, I'm not sure I do like writing! I like storytelling. I like being creative. I guess what I like is how writing can surprise you. How creativity can excavate some ideas you didn't even know you had. I love wordplay and scratching away to crystallise a thought. By far, the best thing about writing is that it is a way to connect to others. I find that endlessly rewarding.

-How did you get to know the characters you created?

The main characters in this book, ***The Belly of a Wolf,*** are based on myself and my best friend. So, I knew them already. The other characters were composites of people I have known. I'm very visual, so I see the whole thing in my head.

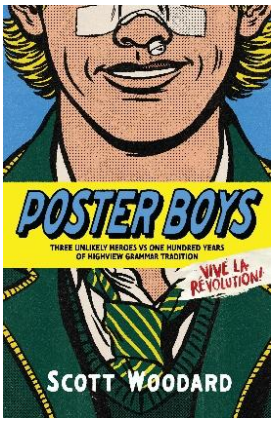
-How do books help give us a perspective on "difficult issues''?

Books allow us to safely experience difficult things. You are not forced to read a book. You can put it down when it gets too much. Books draw us into a character's life. We feel for them, relate to them, and have empathy for them. This helps us to understand the world around us. Stories have always been used as a way to help us understand the difficult parts of life - be it myths, fairytales or Dreamtime stories. It is a way to impart wisdom.

Difficult issues are real. Suicide is the number one cause of death for young people. By the time a person reaches 25 years old, one in two of them has been affected by it. By talking about it, bringing the issue to light, we create an environment where it is easier for young people to seek the help they need and to know they are not alone.

-As an author, what do you think is important to consider in the author's point of view re: writing about "difficult topics" for YA?

When writing for young people, authenticity is very important. Young people have a strong nose for phony writing. When I was writing the book, I read through old diaries from the time - I even used some of the writing from 15-year-old me. My editor, author Kate O'Donnell, was excellent at letting me know when I was sounding too adult. The other important element is hope. A teenager only has a short life behind them, and most of it is childhood. An adult author owes the young reader a sense of perspective that allows for hope. Share the story. ~ Julienne



POSTER BOYS

(Hachette/ Lothian Children's)

https://www.hachette.com.au/scott-woodard/poster-boys

by Scott WOODARD

https://www.scottwoodard.com.au/

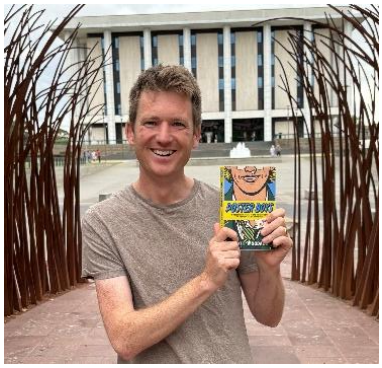


I'm always amazed by the *power* of storytelling. And no, I don't mean how stories build whole worlds inside your imagination (although that is incredible). I mean the god-like power you wield by being a storyteller.

As the storyteller, you control what your audience hears, as well as what it doesn't.
You set the mood: from heartwarming to tearjerking. You choose who the heroes are. You show us how they're brave and righteous, but not how they pick their nose or lie when they've farted.
And you decide who the villains are – and why we should loathe them like you do.
But most importantly, you control what we think and feel when the story ends. Does Goldilocks escape and learn any lessons? Or is she bear food? That's up to you.

I thought a lot about the power of storytelling while writing my novel *Poster Boys*. My setting – Highview Grammar School – is full of stories. Footy wins are recounted at assemblies. Honour boards line the walls. The school song declares: 'We're high above the rest'. In every case, the story being told is this: Highview is exceptional.

But three disgruntled students have a different story to tell. They're sick of the school's pointless traditions, its strict rules and narrow-minded view of success. They want some changes to Highview's culture. So, how can they convince their classmates when stepping out of line will mean getting expelled?
Easy. They'll do it through spreading stories: posters and emails that paint the school in a very different light.
Poster Boys explores how every story—be it real or fiction—is shaped by its teller's point of view.



It doesn't matter if the teller is a novelist, teacher, politician, journalist, keyboard warrior or even your parent: what we hear is what the storyteller *wants* us to hear.

So, why are they telling the story this way? What's their agenda? And what might they be leaving out? That's for the teller to know – and you to find out!

Yep, even ***Poster Boys*** has its own point of view. I hope you have fun pulling it to pieces while you're reading. Share the story. ~ Scott

KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

What do you like about reading?

I like reading because it lets me explore different worlds and ideas. When I read, I can imagine the characters and settings in my mind, which makes the story feel more real and exciting.
~ Sunaira - Wiley Park PS~

DAYS and DATES: 2026 MARCH - APRIL

These and other religious and cultural dates relevant to Australia are found on the Australian Dept of Home Affairs website https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/calendar-of-cultural-and-religious-dates

March 8	**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY** https://www.iwd.net.au/resources *celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.* 
9 - 20 MARCH	 **EID AL FITR** -The Islamic month of fasting, Ramadan, ends with the festival of Eid al Fitr. A celebratory meal breaks the fast, and good deeds have special significance during this time. Eid is also a time of forgiveness and making amends. The observance is subject to the sighting of the moon.
March 21	HARMONY DAY **HARMONY DAY – *EVERYONE BELONGS*** Our diversity makes Australia a great place to live. Harmony Day is a celebration of our cultural diversity – a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home. The message of Harmony Day is ***'everyone belongs'***. The day aims to engage people to participate in their community, respect cultural and religious diversity and foster a sense of belonging for everyone. https://racismnoway.com.au/news-initiatives/everyone-belongs/
16-22 March	**NEURODIVERSITY CELEBRATION WEEK** - Challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about neurological difference. Theme***: Celebrating different minds*** **https://www.neurodiversityweek.com/** 
28 March	 **EARTH HOUR - W**here millions switch off non-essential lights for one hour to raise awareness about climate change and nature loss - **https://www.earthhour.org.au/**

5 APRIL	**EASTER SUNDAY** is regarded by Christians as the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In 2026, Protestant and Catholic Christians commemorate this on the same date, while Orthodox Christians commemorate this on 12 April 
25 April	**ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.**  ANZAC Day is the anniversary of the day when Australian and New Zealand soldiers landed in Gallipoli in 1915 as part of the Allies' invasion. It is a public holiday to recognise the contribution and sacrifices of all those who have served Australia in times of war and in war-like conflicts. The day is observed with the dawn service, marches and ceremonies across Australia and New Zealand.

Images from: CANVA .COM (Accessed: 19 March 2026)

KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

What makes a "good" book?

A good book has interesting characters, a strong story, and ideas that make the reader think. It should make you want to keep turning the pages to see what happens next.

~ Sunaira - Wiley Park PS~

KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

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KC4KC - KIDS' COMMENTS FOR KIDS' CORNER

What surprises you about "imagination"?

What surprises me about imagination is how powerful it is. Just by reading words on a page, our minds **can create whole worlds, characters, and adventure.**

~ Sunaira - Wiley Park PS~

MORE BITS OF 2026 BOOK WEEK :

Start some "Book Week" reading.



Start reading the CBCA NOTABLES because…

The **CBCA NSW COLLIDE COMPETITION** will invite reading teams to create book trailers based on the Notables.

See some of the samples of Book Trailers made by schools in 2025
https://www.cbcansw.org.au/collide-book-trailers

AND …

shadow judging
BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Start reading the CBCA SHORTLIST because…

The **Shadow Judging Project** will invite students to create poems, images, and a whole range of creative responses to the Shortlisted books.

See samples of some of the 2025 **Creative Responses**
https://shadowjudging.cbca.org.au/all-creative-responses/

This issue of ***KIDS' CORNER*** was compiled by jackie.hawkes7@gmail.com
with the help of LOTS of people who love to read, write, think, imagine and create.
Special THANKS to the many Australian authors and illustrators who share their imaginations and special caring for the worlds and characters they create.

KC looks forward to becoming a more regular part of the caring, kindness and reading in your notably different real and imagined worlds.
We'd love to hear your ideas.
Happy reading always.
Cheers-
Morrie, Magic Morrie, Maryanne Ann O'Mouse and Adventure Morrie

