

Book of the year

Early childhood

Rachel McIntosh

Who am I?

- *I am the past President of the CBCA Sydney West Sub-branch.*
- *I was a shortlisted candidate for the Charlotte Waring Barton Award.*
- *I am an aspiring author and have written manuscripts for both picture and middle school books.*
- *I am a primary school teacher with 13 years experience teaching at schools across Western, South West Sydney and Wollondilly regions, in all grades and in the library.*
- *I am currently teaching kindergarten at Narellan Vale Public School.*
- *I am the mother of a 4 year old boy*

*What makes a good quality
picture book?*

There are many contributing factors to make a picture book a rich, quality text. I have surveyed several teachers, teacher librarians, literacy consultants and parents to ask what their thoughts were. Here are some of their responses;

- *The common response was the visual and written text have to be engaging to the reader.*
- *Language is rich and powerful, this can include such features as repetition, rhyme, alliteration, rich descriptive language that enhances the experience for the audience and expands on the language and vocabulary of younger readers.*
- *Makes the reader want to read it again and again.*
- *The text conveys an important theme or big idea, whilst demanding some emotional response for the audience.*
- *The text can be used as a mentor text for teaching writing.*
- *It provides an escape from the outside world whilst still addressing relevant themes that children can identify with.*
- *Storyline that keeps children intrigued.*



Little Puggles's Song

Vikki Conley
& Hélène Magisson

- *A delightful story set in the Australian bush. Helene Magisson's illustrations capture the unique beauty of the flora and fauna in a style that is reminiscent of May Gibbs'.*
- *Puggle desperately wants to sing in the choir, but every time he tries no sound comes out because echidnas can't sing. He quietly watches and listens to the beautiful sounds of the bush choir, all the while longing to join in.*
- *We can all think of a child, either our own, a student, our younger self or friends who remind us of Puggle. The child that watches quietly from the sidelines, not discouraged by the discouraging words said by others but driven by their dream.*

- *The resilience and perseverance shown by Puggle, which ultimately allow him to show his importance and value and to be appreciated by his peers is a fundamental theme in the development of younger children.*
- *Vikki Clooney captures the unique voices of the Australian birds, in a perfect read aloud text. I loved the expressions of my kindergarten students as I squarked like a cockatoo (they could identify what bird it was not just from the pictures but from the sounds).*
- *A definite add to the collection for all parents, teacher librarians, librarians and all fans of picture books.*
- *A perfect celebration of Australian wildfire which is so important, especially after the devastating bushfires.*

The Book Hook

AMELIA
McInerney
Connah BRECON



- *A hilarious read aloud story, that children and adults alike will love and have children requesting to hear it over and over.*
- *As the audience is introduced to the main character Ray, it is soon revealed that he is not a real chicken but “a drawing”.*
- *The clever usage of rhyme throughout, make the story perfect to read aloud, whilst allowing the younger audience to actively engage in the reading. It also provides a great teaching point, of having children hear the rhyme and identify the spelling patterns and similar words and begin to create their own text.*
- *The interactive component when the text calls for the audience to shout ray out is a fantastic technique and ultimately enhances the engagement and reading experience.*
- *Reading it to my kindergarten class they were all focused and engaged and loved participating in the text. Looking at them while I was reading it I wish I had a go pro to record their delighted and engaged faces.*

- *Ray's hilarious journey throughout the book to figure out a plan to become a real chook and get out of the book, provide many laugh out loud moments.*
- *McInerney's talent shines by providing not only a humorous and silly, fun story to read with your children, students, grandchildren but there is a deeper and underlying theme that is indeed relevant and relatable to all readers. Ray is continuously seeking to be something that he isn't, he wants to get out of the book and be a real chook, as he thinks being a real chook is much more exciting and interesting than being a 'book chook' and stuck in a drawing. Ray's friend Janine, is a realist and helps him realise that being a real chook isn't as interesting as he would like to think.*
- *The themes of self acceptance and identifying the difference between others and yourself and ultimately being happy with where you are in life are throughout the book and align with the PDHPE syllabus.*
- *A perfect present or addition to any family, school or public library.*

BAZ & BENZ

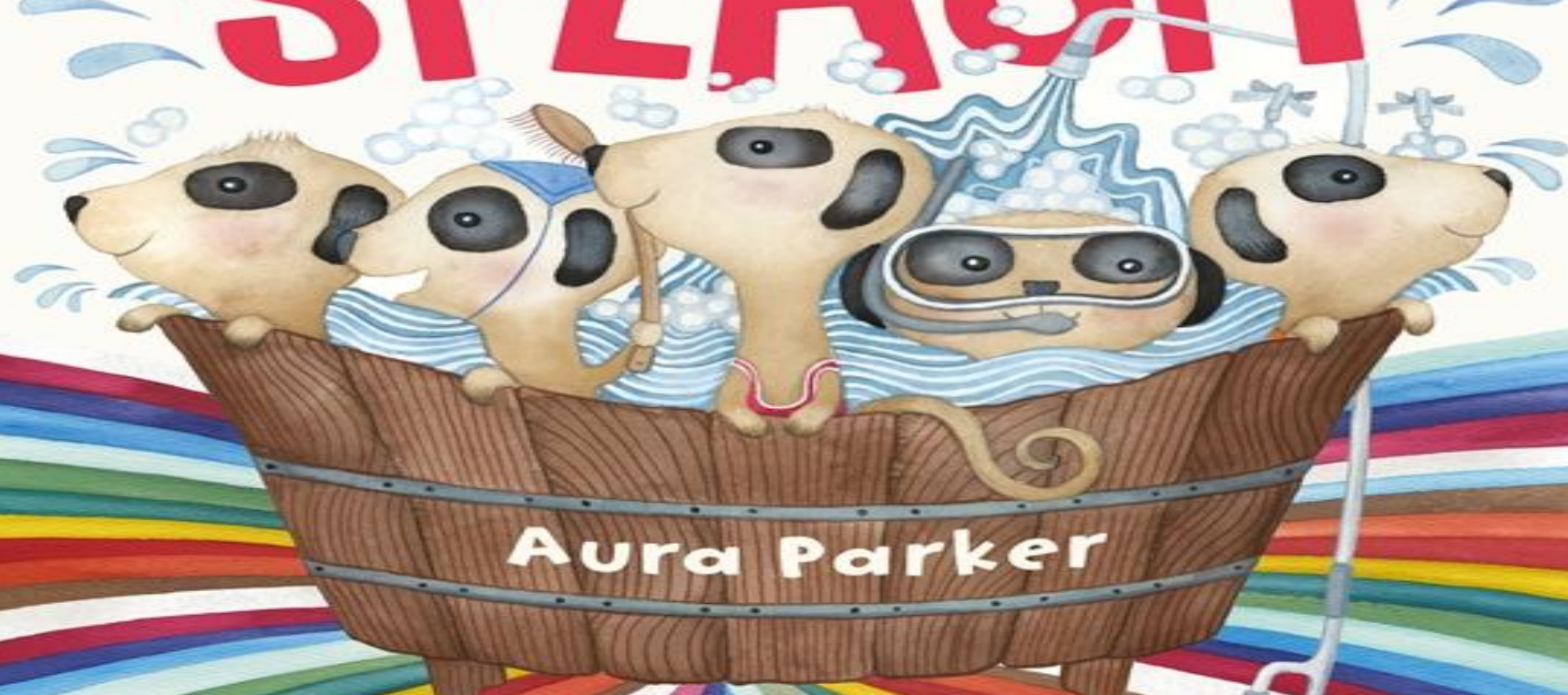
HEIDI MCKINNON



- *A delightful funny story about friendship and the two different personalities of Baz and Benz.*
- *Like most friendships there is a balance, the ying and yang. Baz is a bit of a worrier and Benz is more relaxed.*
- *Baz's quest to question would their friendship last forever and ever, from turning purple with spots to making the annoying but hilarious and laugh out loud sound of MEEP, proves that Benz is a loyal friend and will be his friend no matter what (even if he is annoying).*

- *Baz's anxiety around his friendship with Benz is one that resonates with most preschoolers and kindergarten children, as they learn to navigate different personalities, relationships and boundaries.*
- *This was one of my son's favourite books, we read it over and over again. He loved the MEEP noise and would request to read the Meep book.*
- *A funny and engaging book to must pick for all parents and educators,*

MEERKAT SPLASH



Aura Parker

- *Aura Parker has delivered the perfect marriage of illustrations and written text in this engaging and entertaining book.*
- *The use of colours rather than names to identify each meerkat provides for a great teaching point for colour recognition.*
- *The clever rhyming used for the meerkats suchs as “Can you smell a stinky stink? Bathtime quick for Meerkat Pink”, not only provides humour, but allows the young audience to enhance their hearing and knowledge of sounds and patterns (for example ‘pink and stink rhyme, see how they have the ink in them, what other words sound the same’).*
- *The alliteration used throughout further supports the rhyming and read out loud quality of the book. I have read this to my kindergarten class several times, on the second read I explained alliteration and we used the text to find examples, one of my students the next day told me that when she was at home she noticed alliteration in her bedtime story!*

- *The storyline of all the meerkats having a bath together is something that most young readers can relate too. I know reading this book to both my son and my students, we spoke about having a bath with cousins or siblings, how much fun it was and how things can get a little crazy.*
- *The illustrations allow the audience to count the meerkats as they splash into their bath. Again this provides a learning point as each meerkat can be counted to discover just how many meerkats are in the bath.*
- *I just love the illustrations of the swirling water. Thanks to Instragram, I was able to send Aura a message asking how she achieved this. My class were very excited for the reply and we had so much fun completing the artwork.*
- *I highly recommend this book to parents, educators, librarians, grandparents, lovers of picture books.*

GOODBYE HOUSE, HELLO HOUSE



Margaret WILD
Ann JAMES

- Yet another creative collaboration from Margaret Wild and Ann James.
- The unique illustrations with Emma in black and white and the landscape or house in colour, reinforces the focus on Emma and her experience and feelings in each setting.
- Emma moves from the countryside to the city, both very different places. The audience are taken on a journey with Emma as she says goodbye to her house in the country and the things she loves to do such as fishin in the river. The illustrations not only complement and reinforce the text but provide an inferential message to the audience by her body language etc.
- When Emma arrives to her new house it is very clear to the audience that things are different but we are soon reassured that although some things are different,, there are many things that are similar as Emma finds comfort and familiarity in her new surroundings.

- *Goodbye House, Hello House* is not only engaging to children but is relevant and relatable, assisting young children understand and identify the changes that come when moving house.
- After reading this book with my kindergarten class we had a discussion about who had moved house and how many times they had moved. One 5 year old boy had said that he had moved house 6 times in his short life. Reading the book and having this discussion gave students the opportunity to voice their feelings and share their experiences with their peers.
- The concepts and themes of self identity, place and family align with the PDHPE and History syllabus, when reading in a school setting.
- A definite addition to any home, school or public library collection.

RENÉE TREML

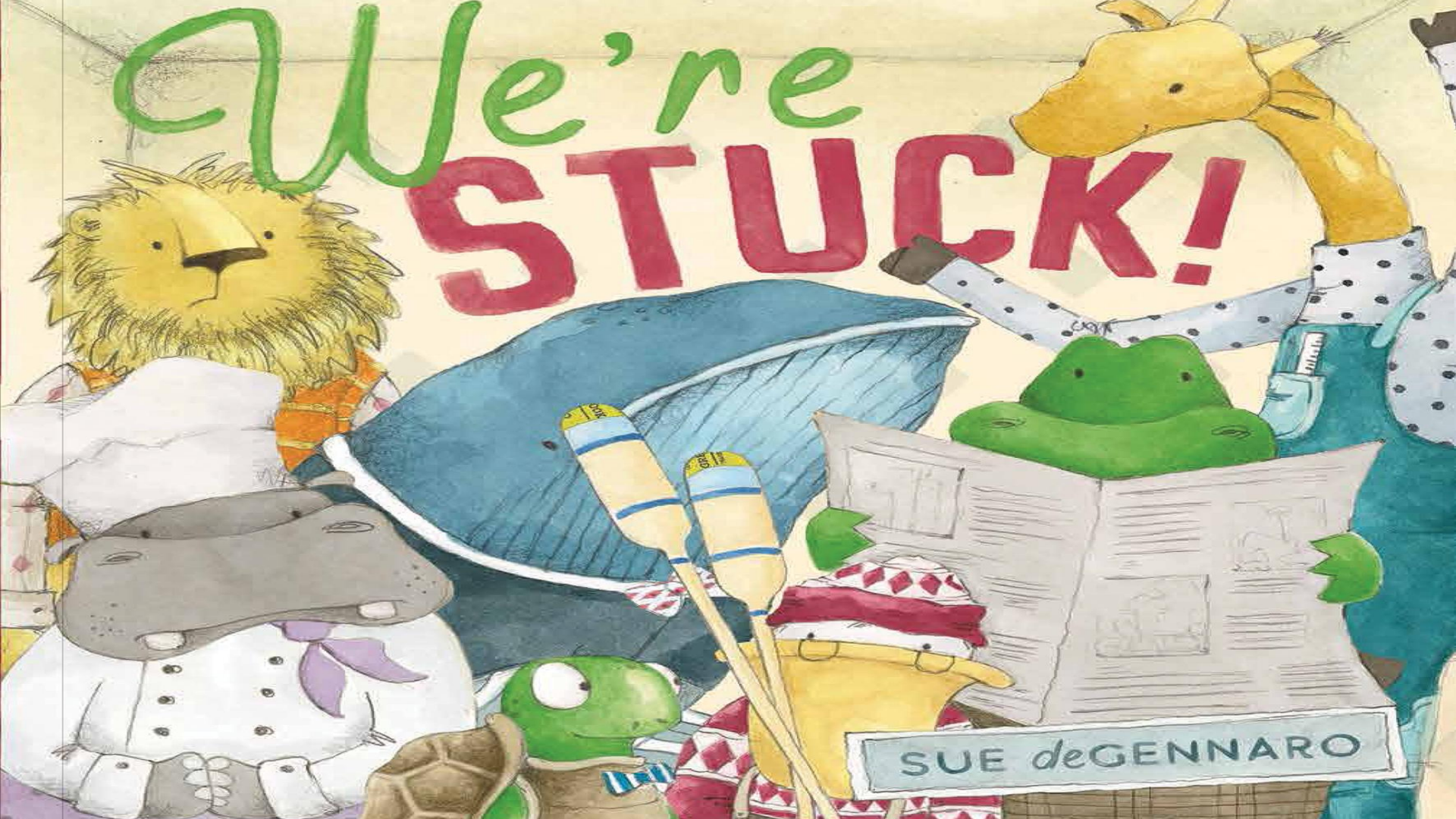
Sleep tight, Platypup



- Rene Treml has produced a heartwarming story, exploring a child's fear of the dark and night through the eyes of a baby platypus, Platypup.
- Through Platypup, the reader learns about the lifestyle and habitat of the platypus, from where they live, and perhaps most important that they are nocturnal animals. From a teaching perspective this would fit in well with Science and Technology and PDHPE.
- Platypup's mum is out at night and Platypup is left in his burrow. He wakes to shapes and shadows which make him very frightened, he is unsure of what they are and alarmed by the strange noises he hears.
- This fear of the night and waking to the dark where objects appear differently and the world is just a bit scary for a child is something that most young children can relate too.
- Platypup's mum takes him out and teaches him that the night is also filled with beautiful things and shows him that the noises and shapes of the night are the same as the day but just appear different.

- *Through her gentle and nurturing guidance Platypup's mum shows him that he has nothing to fear in the night and indeed things are beautiful and magical.*
- *After reading this book to my class we discussed who was afraid of the dark or had been and how things often appear differently like a door can become a monster, all the children could relate to fearing the dark or being fearful of something and finding comfort and safety from their mum.*
- *Trembl describes Platypup's fears and anxiety as he is encouraged by his mother to come out of the burrow, "he took a deep breath and peeked out", all readers young and old can relate to this feeling.*
- *A fantastic book that children and adults can relate to whilst learning about the habitat of the platypus.*
- *The perfect addition for all home, school and public libraries.*

We're STUCK!



SUE deGENNARO

- Yet another talented author/illustrator, Sue deGennaro delivers a heartwarming and extremely relevant book, appealing to children and adults alike.
- Turtle lives in a city apartment, where his neighbours are always rushing somewhere, too busy to take the time to exchange even the most basic of greetings as they cram into the lift each day. Sound familiar?
- I don't live in a busy city apartment, but as a full time working mother I can completely relate to the pressure and rush we can feel to just get through our basic day. I'm sure many people can relate to avoiding conversations because there are so many things to do, or as a parent saying I'm sorry I can't play with you at the moment or stay with you while you go to sleep because I have more work to do.
- One day, everything in Turtle's world comes to an abrupt halt, as it does for his neighbours who are in the lift with him.. In the current and unique times we are living in of social distancing and isolation, I'm sure many people can relate to the feeling of being stuck. Although all the animals stuck in a lift, doesn't quite meet the current social distancing criteria.

- *From the moment the animals realise they are stuck in the lift, they all begin panicking about the places they have to get too, the jobs they need to do. deGennaro creates an image of panic as everyone complains about how they need to get somewhere. That is until they hear Turtle crying because it is his birthday.*
- *In a true display of human (or animal) spirit, the characters unite together using what supplies they have and sharing cakes to give Turtle a birthday celebration in this unique environment. Through this unity and friendship the animals connect with each other, learning more about each other and forgetting their worries that seemed ever pressing only a few moments earlier.*
- *By the time the fireman come to rescue everyone, no one notices because they are having such a great time and even the fireman join in the celebrations.*
- *In these uncertain times, this book is perfect to read to young children to demonstrate and discuss the good that happens when people are forced to band together.*
- *We're Stuck would be the perfect addition to a home, class, school or public library.*

THE HOLE IDEA

BETH AND PAUL
MACDONALD

NATHANIEL
ECKSTROM



- Much anticipated picture book from Paul and Beth McDonald
- Reinforces and embraces creativity and imagination, which is a vital part of development for children and indeed an essential element in the creative writing process.
- As teachers with a jam packed syllabus to teach, we often don't have the opportunity to encourage and foster imagination that is fundamental to children's growth and development and indeed writing.
- Finnan's search for an idea to write of is something that both children and adults often struggle with in the creative process, often referred to as writer's' block or from children "I don't know what to write".
- Young children often interpret the things we say very literally, this is identified when Finnan's ask his gran for her advice about writing and she tells him to dig deep, Finnan continues on his creative journey literally digging a hole.

- *As Finnan begins his adventures seeking to find an idea, we are transported to the world of Finnan's imagination and all the wonderful and exciting, adventurous things he discovers.*
- *Finnan demonstrates resilience by not giving up as he searches for the perfect idea.*
- *I love the use of "He wondered. He pondered. He dreamed." As young Finnan lays in his boat, with all these fabulous ideas and stories running through his mind. I know as a writer I have often found myself sitting back and wondering, pondering and dreaming. As a teacher I think this essential element of the creative writing process is one that can be skimmed over and not completely embraced and fostered, particularly in younger writers.*
- *The Hole Idea provides for a great writing model, to develop and encourage individuality, creativity and imagination in young writers, whilst acknowledging the adversities and challenges that occur in the writing process.*
- *I highly recommend The Hole Idea for parents and educators, making it the perfect additional home, school and public libraries.*