

# CBCA Tasmania Newsletter

## April 2025

The Children's Book Council of Australia (Tasmania Branch) Inc.,  
PO Box 113, Moonah, TAS 7009 ([tas@cbca.org.au](mailto:tas@cbca.org.au))

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### From the Desk:

### Steve Martin, President Tasmanian Branch

#### **Independent Review of Education Final Report alignment to *Read Aloud To Your Child Every Day* National Campaign**

The [Independent Review of Education Final Report](#) highlights literacy as the foundation for student success and lifelong learning. It stresses the need for early intervention, evidence-based teaching, and stronger community engagement to improve educational outcomes. While the report focuses on Tasmania, its insights apply nationally: early literacy is the key to breaking cycles of disadvantage and improving life opportunities.

The ***Read Aloud To Your Child Every Day*** campaign directly supports this vision. Our five-year national initiative (submitted to federal Treasury for funding earlier this year) is designed to encourage a national culture of make reading aloud a daily habit in every family from birth, ensuring children develop the essential language and literacy skills they need to succeed.

#### **Collaboration: A National Effort to Combat Illiteracy**

A major task in our campaign is collaboration. It aims to bring together councils, governments, schools, parent groups, not-for-profits, multicultural and First Nations organisations, and even Australian TV productions, to tackle literacy challenges at their core. By integrating *Read Aloud To Your Child Every Day* themes into television programming and partnering with stakeholders to distribute accessible resources, we can increase the reach of our message and make reading aloud a cultural norm.

A key element of our approach is providing adaptable campaign resources that partners can incorporate within their own branding. This enables them to uphold their unique identity while

uniting under a common national message, and strengthening literacy advocacy within our communities.

The Independent Review of Education Final Report makes it clear: if we fail to prioritise early literacy, we risk perpetuating cycles of educational disadvantage that will then require increasing financial resources for remediation. The growing demand for remedial education, adult literacy programs, and additional learning support will continue to place pressure on an already stretched system.

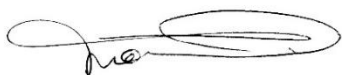
Our campaign offers an immediate, proactive solution that aligns with the report's recommendations. By fostering a culture of daily reading aloud, we can improve literacy rates, reduce long-term educational inequalities, and build more skilled, resilient communities. With federal funding, we can expand this campaign to every Australian household, ensuring that reading aloud becomes a nationwide habit, one that transforms literacy outcomes for generations to come.

**Mem Fox**, celebrated Australian author and educator, says: *"If every parent understood the huge educational benefits and intense happiness brought about by reading aloud to their children, and if every parent and every adult caring for a child, read aloud a minimum of three stories a day to the children in our lives, we could possibly wipe out illiteracy within one generation"*

The Independent Review of Education Final Report provides a strong case for action, and the *Read Aloud To Your Child Every Day* campaign provides a tangible, collaborative path forward.

Steve Martin

**President**



Steve Martin

President, Tasmania Branch, Children's Book Council of Australia

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## Rosie's Reading A Head Start for Tassie Kids

**Do you know a family with a child under 6 months of age in Rocherlea or Mayfield?**

**Follow the [Rosie's Reading](#) link to find out how to enrol them.**



## Dipping into the CBCA 2025 Notables

The announcement of the Notable books always creates a flurry of excitement for those with their finger on the pulse of Australian children's publishing. Preliminary discussions start around coffee tables, staff rooms and on forums about which books on these lists might be selected for the shortlist. Along with the books that are listed are ones that have been read, adored, and sadly omitted. The following commentary presents some thoughts shared by three of CBCA Tasmania's avid readers on just a handful of the titles that we had already read when the list was announced. Note that contributors, Jennie Bales, Nella Pickup and Maureen Mann are not judges and these are personal insights. We do hope you find some that resonate!

[Two that have been reviewed have made the 2025 Shortlist (titles are highlighted)]

Our annual Notables Critique booklet - [Notable Children's Literature 2025](#) is here. This year it is available as a digital download.



### 2025 Notables Children's Literature 2025 Booklet

\$10.00 AUD

Tax included. [Shipping](#) calculated at checkout.

Quantity

- 1 +

Add to cart

Buy with [shop Pay](#)

## OLDER READERS

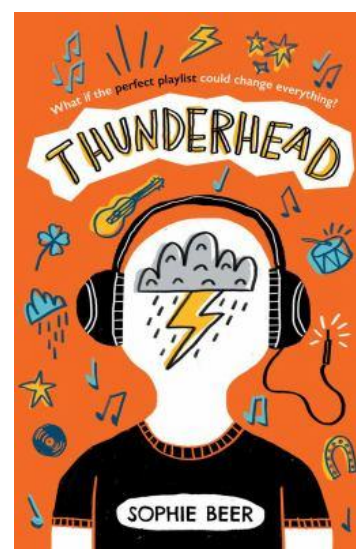
### **Sophie Beer. Thunderhead** (Allen & Unwin)

Thunderhead, who uses her online persona throughout the book, is coping with all the anxieties of first year high school but also with the increasing threat of losing her hearing because of a tumour on the nerve that controls balance and hearing. This is a major challenge for someone whose life is music. The narrative is enhanced by graphics, but above all by a wonderful playlist introducing each chapter.

Beer, to be congratulated for dealing with such a challenging issue, has included a QRcode linking a Spotify playlist of all the music.

This book deserves its position on the Notables list (and possibly the Short List) but for me, I couldn't quite relate to Thunderhead.

*Maureen (Nella really likes this title)*





**Amy Doak. Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret.** (Penguin)

A fast-paced mystery for the YA market as 16-year-old Eleanor Jones, amateur detective returns (with her friends helping her), lands in trouble again. As part of a school community project Eleanor meets a dementia patient at the Cooinda nursing home who tells her about a long ago murder of two of the town's citizens and begs her to keep it secret. Eleanor is driven to investigate and ends up in deep trouble and danger as her investigations coincide and become entangled with a gang of thieves targeting the town.

The story also has several sub-layers as well as a romantic angle to appeal to teenagers. It provides a good engaging read with strong family and friendship representations in a typical Australian country town. This is the second book in a series. Prior reading of the first book, *Eleanor Jones is NOT a murderer* would be advantageous but not necessary.

*Jennie*



## YOUNGER READERS

**Garth Nix. We do not Welcome our Ten-year-old Overlord.** (Allen & Unwin)

A tight, tense and riveting story set in Canberra in 1975 at an experimental farm attached to the university, and framed around the game playing of Dungeons and Dragons by Kim, Bennie and their friend; younger sisters, Eila and Madir, are excluded much to their disgust. When Eila spots what looks to be a head in the lake and fetches it out, Kim and Bennie fight off the power it emanates, but Eila succumbs and lets it feed into her mind. And things start to change - for better and for worse. Kim takes a moral stance to protect his little sister but is thwarted at every turn - by Eila - or the alien? Garth Nix is a master story teller and this exciting story also has great moments of humour throughout and most 10 to 14 year old readers will see similarities in sibling rivalry, friendship ups and downs and different ways of parenting. The audio performance was excellent, with Kim's voice, the dilemmas and dangers he faces, building to an exciting conclusion.

*Jennie*



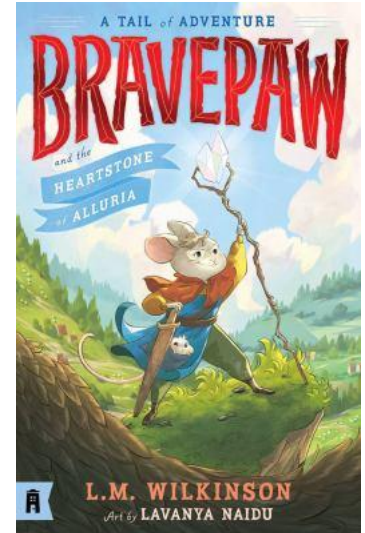
*Two that missed the Notables but are worth a look.*

**L.M. Wilkinson & Lavanya Naidu (illustrator). Bravepaw and the Heartstone of Alluria.** (Allen & Unwin)

This addictive read is a quest as adventurous and filled with magic and prophecy as Emily Rodda's Landovel but for those aged 6+. Titch, the smallest mouse in her family, longs to be like Bravepaw, the hero in her favourite stories. When DIRE TROUBLE comes to the Plateau, Titch and her loyal best friend Huckleberry set out to save their world by repairing the crack in the Heartstone of Alluria.

Lavanya Naidu's black and white artworks are stunning. Unfortunately, as a beginning to a series, Bravepaw cannot be considered for the BOTY Awards.

*Nella (also a favourite of Maureen and Jennie.)*

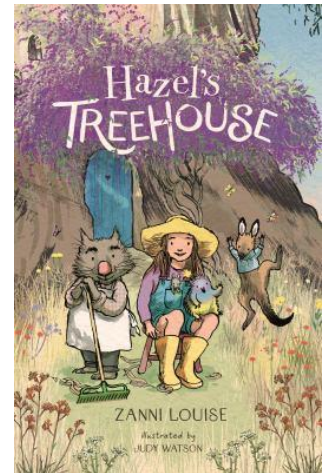


**Zanni Louise & Judy Watson (illustrator). Hazel's Treehouse.** (Walker Books Australia)

This is a timeless gentle collection of stories presented in a beautiful hardback with a textured cover. 9-year-old Hazel lives in a treehouse with her friends Odette (a very active pademelon), Walter (a grumpy wombat), Tiny (a honey possum) and Poky (a 'feelings echidna' who changes colour depending on Hazel's mood). Their adventures are not always successful, but their friendship endures.

Judy Watson's illustrations are delightful, particularly the native wildflowers at the start of each story.

*Nella*



## PICTURE BOOKS

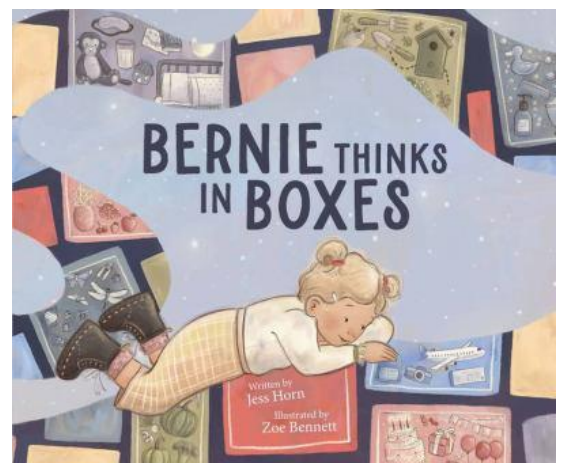
**Zoe Bennett & Jess Horn (illustrator). Bernie Thinks in Boxes.** (Affirm Press)

Bernie keeps her life in boxes but not always the physical kind. Her life, at home, school and with friends, is comfortably compartmentalised until she has to cope when her boxes overlap and she realises that things can belong in more than one place. She's invited to a party in the park: her school friend box doesn't fit into the park box and her party box doesn't fit into the park! She finds a solution, supported by everyone around her, especially her mother.

It's a wonderful book explaining neurodiversity in a neurotypical world, which will be understood by young readers as well as readers of all ages. Bennett's illustrations are soft pastels with her 'boxes' like concept maps, supporting Bernie's perceptions.

I love it. I hope it makes it to the Short List. [It didn't...]

*Maureen (also a favourite for Jennie)*





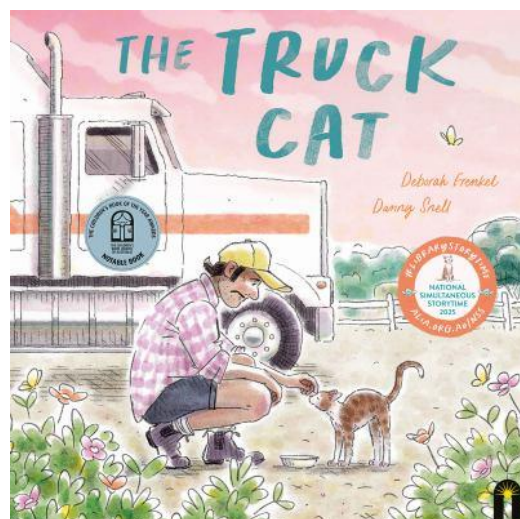
**Danny Snell & Deborah Frenkel (illustrator). The Truck Cat.** (Hardie Grant)

The book's blurb says it all: The Truck Cat is a story about cats and humans, immigration and identity, and homes lost and found. Yacoub, finding his way in a new country, and Tinka drive Australia's wide-open places, missing home in their separate ways. They are separated but eventually find themselves back together bringing much more to their relationship.

Snell's gentle water-colour illustrations enhance the carefully chosen words and he has used pictures ranging from full double page to framed and unframed moments, with lots of 'white space'.

Wonderful. It is also the 2025 National Simultaneous Storytime book.

*Maureen (also a favourite for Jennie)*



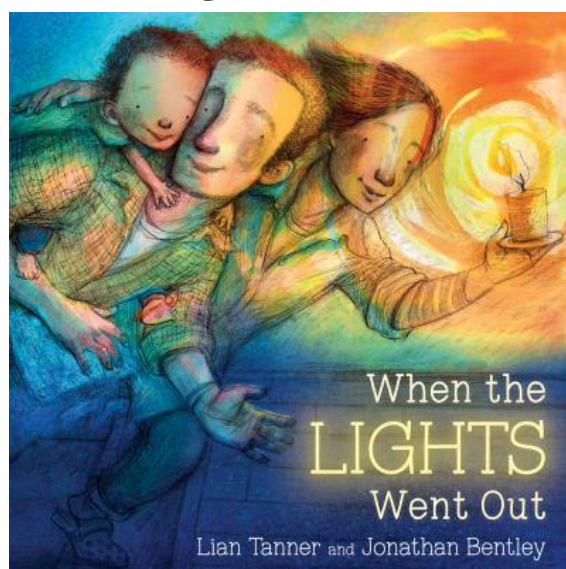
## EARLY CHILDHOOD

*We were all sorry to see the excellent picture book by Tasmania's Lian Tanner miss the list - a possible for either the Early Childhood or Picture Book categories.*

**Lian Tanner & Jonathan Bentley (illustrator). When the Lights Went Out.** (Allen & Unwin)

The lights have gone out; the child is frightened, but Dad and Mama turn it into a game. Then the family hears music. Outside their neighbours are smiling. Mrs Martinez is playing her guitar and Mr Harada is dancing; the community is comforting the children. Jonathan Bentley's pencil and watercolour illustrations beautifully complement the story adding warmth and a sense of welcome to a chilly night. Just like in Pip Harry's *Over or Under* (illustrated by Hilary Jean Tapper), being with family (and neighbours) makes you brave.

*Nella*



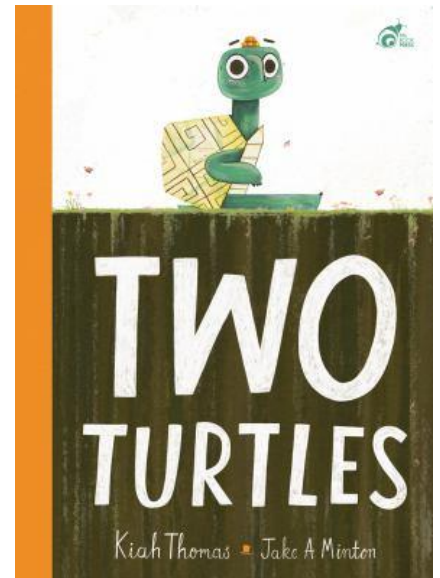
**Kiah Thomas & Jake A Minton (illustrator). Two Turtles.** (Little Book Press)

A clever and witty story of two turtles who are very competitive and always trying to beat the other. When stuffing their shells full of different objects to prove who can fit the most in, there is a mishap and Frank topples off the top of the cliff. Determined not to let Frank beat him to the bottom, Terence follows him down. The storyteller begs them to work together and save themselves, but can they? Or is winning, (and dying) more important?

There are many opportunities to encourage prediction and problem solving throughout. Jake Minton's illustrations provide the perfect foil for this funny story with a range of page spreads, illustrated writing and different perspectives. The double page spreads that show the cliff on one side and the turtles falling on the other draw the eye to the plunging turtles. The mix of close up and panoramic views contribute different perspectives to the story and sit nicely with the second person perspective of the storyteller. The amount of text varies and is at times, minimal as the illustrations progress the plot (and the impending doom). The facial expressions and different body positions of turtles in free fall add to the humour.

Perfect harmony between text and illustrations is achieved and the second person narrative draws the reader into the dare devil antics. Glorious!

*Jennie*



**EVE POWNALL AWARD**

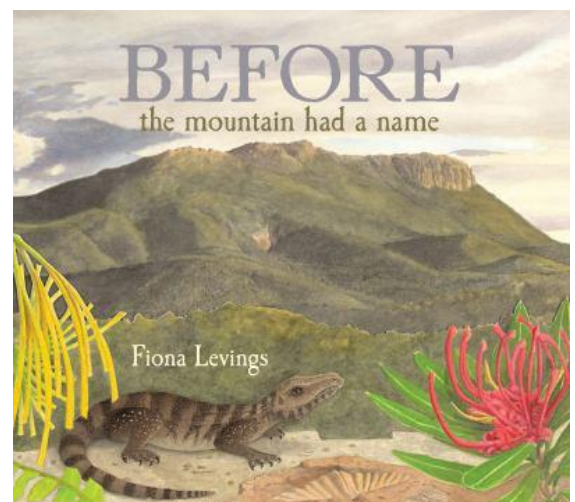
**Fiona Levings. Before the Mountain has a Name.** (Forty South)

This wonderful book, written and illustrated by Tasmanian Fiona Levings tells the story of kunanyi/Mt Wellington from its earliest creation to current times. Great changes in the land and the plants, animals and eventually humans that inhabit it, take place over a series of double page spreads that cleverly portray the geographical layers as the mountain rises from the Permian Sea through to its current form. Appropriate fossils are illustrated within the geological layers. There is so much scope to enjoy this book - as a fascinating story initially, but then for deeper exploration as a geologist and scientist, to explore the evolution of landforms and understanding the passing time and its effect on life on our planet.

Levings' multi-layered work transcends its local setting to be relevant and meaningful to inquiring minds from a young age to young adult.

I loved this book for its original approach and thinks it deserves to be on the Short List. [It isn't...]

*Jennie*

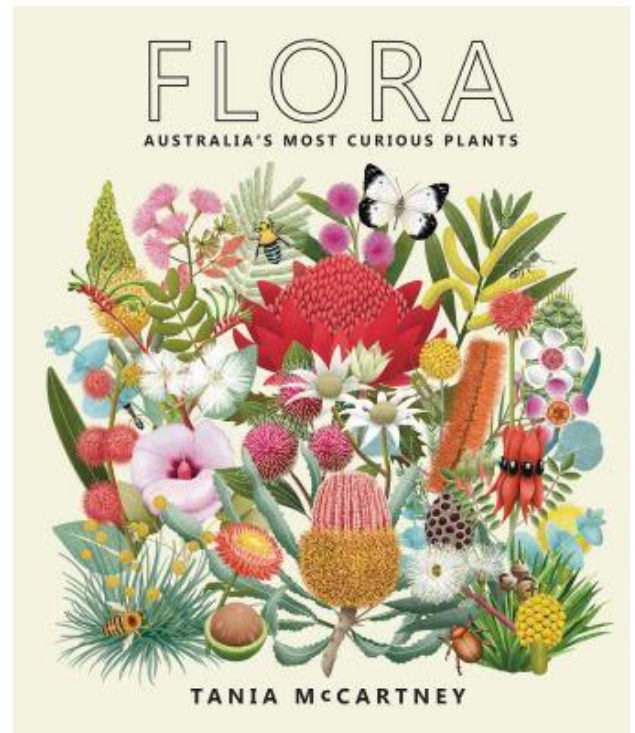


**Tania McCartney. Flora: Australia's most Curious Plants.** (NLA)

McCartney presents comprehensive coverage of Australia's native plants. Each double-page spread features a particular aspect, from parts of a plant, plant families (e.g. grasses, acacia, wildflowers), environmental factors and locations such as water and desert plants, bush food and other indigenous connections, floral emblems and so forth. Each double page spread is packed with information and supporting illustrations and diagrams to expand on the clearly organised groupings of information. The book is enhanced by clear maps, a future focus, threats and challenges for sustainability.

A high quality attractive and accessible information book that will meet a variety of needs for different aged readers. Excellent!

*Jennie*



[See all 2025 Notables Titles](#)

[See all 2025 Shortlist Titles](#)

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## Consider Registering for 2025

**All schools who register and are CBCA Members receive access to SORA and Story Box Library during the SJ Program**



**Young voices are  
welcome here**

The home of the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA)  
Sun Project: Shadow Judging Book of the Year program.

 shadow judging  
BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS



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## 2025 Merchandise: a small glimpse of the available merch

### Combo Bundles



**2025 Book-Week-in-a-Tube**

~~\$100.00 AUD~~ \$71.50 AUD



**2025 Giant Book-Week-in-a-Tube**

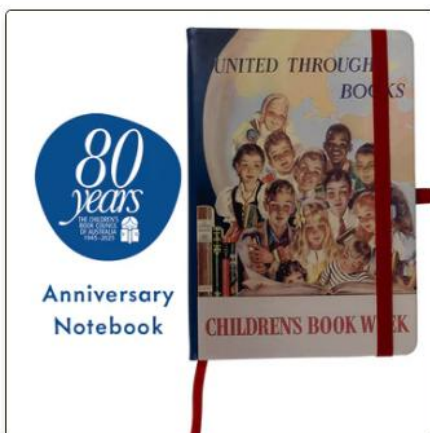
~~\$182.50 AUD~~ \$137.50 AUD



**2025 Desk Set Bundle**

~~\$64.64 AUD~~ \$54.98 AUD

### 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Merchandise



**CBCA 80th Anniversary Notebook 2025**

\$19.99 AUD



**2025 Wall/Window Decal Set**

\$105.00 AUD



**Echo the Emu Toy**

\$55.00 AUD

Have you thought of co-ordering with another school to help with postage costs?

### Merchandise e-store

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## 2026 Tasmanian Judges

### Early Childhood



#### Anna Davidson - 2026

Anna has been an educator for over 20 years, teaching in Australia, China, and Canada. With a strong background in primary education, she later transitioned into the role of teacher librarian, allowing her to merge her passion for pedagogy, critical thinking, and literature while working with a diverse range of students.

Currently serving as Head of Library at The Hutchins School in nipaluna/Hobart, Anna engages students across all year levels, delivering dynamic library lessons for Pre-Kindergarten to Year 5 and fostering a love of reading among older students through informal interactions. She is particularly passionate about the annual CBCA Book Week, where she leads a shadow judging program for Junior School students, culminating in the much-anticipated School Choice Award ceremony.

A dedicated lifelong learner, Anna holds master's degrees in Gifted Education, Teacher Librarianship, and Indigenous Education. She is honoured to serve as a judge for the Early Childhood category, firmly believing that there is a picture book for every reader, every learning moment, and every occasion.

### Picture Book / New Illustrator



#### Dr Mark Macleod - 2026

Dr Mark Macleod designed courses in Children's Literature for Macquarie University and Charles Sturt University and has taught Children's Literature at universities and writers' centres around the world. For many years he was a regular presenter on national television and radio and he has mentored many developing writers and illustrators.

As Publishing Director at Random House Australia and Publisher, Mark Macleod Books at Hachette Australia, he published and edited over 500 books for young readers, many of them award-winning, and has been National President of the Children's Book Council of Australia, President of the NSW Branch and a judge for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, the Norman Lindsay Festival Award, and the Henry Lawson Award, among other prizes. His services to Children's Literature were recognised with the Lady Cutler Award and the Pixie O'Harris Award. A writer for both young people and adults, Mark's next book is a collection of poems for adults, *City of Rainbows*.

## JUDGES 2024-2026

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## Membership

Purchase your 2025 [Personal or Institutional Membership](https://cbcatas.org.au/membership/): details via this link.

These subscriptions not only support CBCA Tasmania Branch, but also help to keep you informed about what is happening in CBCA Tasmania and in Australia.

<https://cbcatas.org.au/membership/>



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### BOOK AWARD STICKERS CAN STILL BE PURCHASED FROM TAS BRANCH

For more information

Email [tas@cbca.org.au](mailto:tas@cbca.org.au)



INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

iBBY  
AUSTRALIA

IBBY Australia has a unique role, promoting Australian authors and illustrators and their books at an international level; and also working towards international understanding through quality literature for young readers. Activities include celebrating International Children's Book Day; nominating authors and illustrators for the Hans Christian Andersen Awards and for Honour Books; supporting the Children in Crisis Appeal; nominating books for the IBBY Disabilities List and the Lampedusa Silent Books List, and awarding IBBY Australia's biennial Ena Noël Award to encourage emerging authors and illustrators. Members receive a quarterly electronic newsletter.

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The ACLF's vision is to enrich the lives of young Australians through the power of story.

**The ACLF's mission is:**

- to promote the value and importance of reading
- to raise the profile of books in the lives of Australian children and young adults
- to respond to identified needs and issues in the children's & youth literature national landscape
- to champion the cause of young Australians' reading in a consultative, collegial and inclusive way within a cultural framework that showcases the best of Australian Literature for young people, and
- to undertake selected national projects that will promote these objects nationally.

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## Calendar of Events

April 3 2025	<b>International Children's Book Day (IBBY)</b>
May 19 2025	<b>Shortlist Talks in South Venue to be confirmed</b>
May 21 2025	<b>National Simultaneous Storytime The Truck Cat Deborah Frenkl and Danny Snell</b>
June 5 2025	<b>Shortlist Talks in North Scotch Oakburn</b>
Aug 15 2025	<b>2025 Book of the Year Awards announced Shadowers' Choice Awards announced</b>
Aug 15-Aug 23 2025	<b>Children's Book Week Book an Adventure</b>
Aug 22 2025	<b>Southern Readers' Cup (Primary)</b>
Aug 23 2025	<b>80<sup>th</sup> Birthday of CBCA Celebration events TBA</b>

If you have any dates suitable for inclusion, please send them to [tas@cbca.org.au](mailto:tas@cbca.org.au)

Ensure that you include the supporting url (if there is one).

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## The CBCA Tasmania Blog

Are you ready to write?

Jennie is always looking for new contributors and expanding ideas and experiences around children's literature. If you have:

- a story to tell about your engagement with kids' books
- a writing or illustrating process to share
- reviews of some great books shared with the kids or
- the magic of access to a room of books

why not share it on the blog?

Check out examples on the blog itself — <http://cbcatas.blogspot.com/> — and be inspired.

Contact Jennie via [tas@cbca.org.au](mailto:tas@cbca.org.au) with “EOI: CBCA Blog Post” in the subject line.

All expressions of interest will be forwarded to Jennie and she will get back with some guidelines (200 to 300 words is a good baseline) and discuss a date.



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## The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature

The Centre holds one of the world's largest and most comprehensive collections of translations of Australian children's books. We hold over 5,500 translations in 68 different languages. This collection continues to grow through the generosity of Australian publishers, authors, illustrators, and private donors. For example, we hold *Fox* (Allen & Unwin, 2000), by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks in 15 different editions, including eight different languages.

<https://www.ncacl.org.au/make-a-donation/>

We welcome visitors and researchers to the Centre. Please contact Emeritus Professor Belle Alderman, Director, if you wish to visit.

<https://www.ncacl.org.au/>





Reading Time is a great source of information and reviews <http://readingtime.com.au/>



[Gift Fund Donation](#)



[Awards Foundation Donation](#)

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