



SINCE 1945 — YOUR CONNECTION TO STORY

ANNUAL REPORT

For year ending
December 2017

Gail Erskine

In 2017 CBCA NSW Branch continued to provide a diverse range of activities to its members and the community in its endeavor to focus on its mission of engaging the community with quality literature. A new free February event, The Night of the Notables, held in collaboration with Dymocks, Sydney, proved to be very successful. Our Patron, Ms Megan Mitchell unveiled the Notables for 2017 while Nette Hilton (NSW judge) and Jacqueline Harvey delivered outstanding talks. This focus on the Notables raised the process of judging for the Book of the Year Awards which is CBCA core business to members and the public.

One month later, the announcement of the Short List, was celebrated at the Anticipate! Appreciate! Applaud! event, which, due to the demolition of the Menzies, was held at Rydges Central. Although the venue did not live up to its promise, the feedback from participants was positive regarding the content. The decision was made to seek a new improved venue for 2018. Our keynote speaker, Freya Blackwood, was brilliant and the launch of the Book Week merchandise which had been designed by Freya, was applauded warmly by all delegates. We thank the panelists for their support and dedication. They read so many books while compiling their personal short lists into such diverse presentations. Many publishers supported the Trade Fair and supplied author/illustrator speakers who gave an insight into their writing process and told us the back story to their books. Dymocks Burwood was the bookshop and had a huge array of wonderful titles. Quality Australian Literature was certainly the star of this day.

Another new event - just for kids - was held at the NSW Teachers Federation auditorium to celebrate Book Week. Author, Wai Chim and illustrator, Dale Newman were the guest speakers. Wai was inspiring both in her story and her energetic delivery which involved the student audience. Dale illustrated the process of creating such amazing images and likewise held the audience spellbound. Equally impressive were the students who delivered authentic reviews of the shortlisted books in the Younger and Older Readers category. All school students went home with a book and sincere appreciation is offered to the many publishers for their book donations.

The *Kids AAA* videoconference for Younger Readers featured reading teams from Wallsend and Whalan Public Schools with guest author Belinda Murrell. This event gave schools throughout the state a chance to connect through DART distance education.

Over 100 entries were received from across Australia for the Aspiring Writers Mentorship Program. The judges forwarded the long list to HarperCollins, who selected a shortlist of three. Congratulations to the winner, Maura Pierlot, from the ACT, for her young adult manuscript, titled *Freefalling*. Kate Forsyth and Belinda Murrell enthralled the audience with their family story of Charlotte Waring Barton before presenting Maura with this award. Danika Hall, 2016 winner and her mentor, Jen Storer, provided many insights into her mentorship and inspired the would-be authors in the audience to write with renewed vigour. Everyone enjoyed the spectacular view from the HarperCollins' Sydney offices and the hospitality organized by CBCA NSW. Many thanks to Georgina Ballantine who convened this activity and her team of judges Alison Manno, Toni Field, Denise Cramsie, Vivienne Nicoll-Hatton, Susie Munson and Wendy Fitzgerald.

Increasingly it is harder to attract funding for any of our activities. Despite this, we have continued for the past three years, to fund our CBC2U (Children's Book Creators to You) program, which assists authors and illustrators to visit schools that are disadvantaged by location, culture or socio-economics. However, this will not continue unless sponsorship is achieved.

The *STEPS Picture Book Forum and High LIT . . . @ the LIBRARY* convened by Jackie Hawkes continues to strengthen the partnerships of CBCA NSW Branch with our broader reading communities in Western Sydney.

It is with great pleasure that CBCA NSW assisted with the formation of a new sub-branch in the Eastern suburbs. NSW Branch is proud of the active sub-branches that exist and provide fantastic programs and events at the local level. Sub-branches now exist in the following regions: Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Eastern Suburbs, Illawarra South Coast, Newcastle, New England North West, and Northern Sydney. Please read their annual reports to applaud their achievements.

Book Week Merchandise was well supported and the creative design by Freya Blackwood ensured sales. The process of having merchandise displayed at the AAA and available for purchase early meant that we were able to process our orders very efficiently and despatch promptly. This is a great benefit to our members, especially schools and libraries. We thank all our volunteers who packed our branch orders each week during the period from May to August.

Our website has become a much more vital part of our communication strategy. "A "Kids' Corner", free to all, was an important addition to our website. Here kids (and adults) can find reviews, writing ideas, competitions, and links to interesting book stuff. Thanks to Ian McLean, Jackie Hawkes and Cate James for getting this idea up and running. Jane Webber, our website convenor, has done an amazing job in maintaining this important web presence.

At the moment membership has returned to 680 members across the categories. Despite the best intentions to target Early Childhood educators to become members in 2017, this did not happen. This membership drive is a top priority in 2018. Membership is vital to the continuation of our organization and we are mindful of giving benefits to our members to retain and inspire new members.

2017 proved to be a year of change for CBCA NSW Branch. Tony Cartwright accepted the role of President and helped to develop a more business perspective for which we had been striving. A greater emphasis on trying to gain sponsorship for all activities enabled us to create a prospectus for 2018 activities. The AAA sub-committee was successful in applying for a grant from the Copyright Agency for AAA 2018. Congratulations and well done to convenor, Michelle Dona, and Felicity Jagavkar on this successful submission and to Liz Bowering for gaining NESAC accreditation. Regretfully the Branch accepted Tony's resignation in October and we thank him most sincerely for his efforts.

Our committee consists of ordinary people who work tirelessly on behalf of members to present events and programs. We were pleased to welcome Cate James, Judith Radin and Sarah Foster to our committee during the year while farewelling Ian McLean and Georgina Ballantine. Thanks Ian and Georgina for your support and expertise.

At the CBCA AGM, approval was granted for the establishment of a Structural Working Party to review CBCA structure into a national organisation. Tony Cartwright and subsequently Gail Erskine joined this working party committee. Board chair, Dr Margot Hillel travelled to each branch to discuss the proposed re-structure model and to address branch issues. In November, Margot and Director Cam Jones addressed NSW Branch members. This restructure issue, with implications for all members, is on-going. It was pleasing to see interested members attend this meeting and speak to NSW Branch and sub-branch concerns.

On behalf of NSW Branch, I thank Megan Lavender, our Board Director, and all other Board members for their commitment and achievements at the national level for the past year.

Our Business manager, Felicity Jagavkar continues to be instrumental in the success of our Branch. Her expertise and efficiency ensure the smooth running of our office and she provides a delightful "face" and "voice" to our Branch. I would also like to acknowledge our office volunteers, Emma Broos and Sue Miro. Volunteers are the heart and soul of this organisation.

The continued support of publishers, authors and illustrators and our bookshop members is gratefully acknowledged. The children's book community is filled with very generous people.