

INTRODUCTION

Since their inception in 1946, the **Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards** remain among the most prestigious awards in Australian children's literature. Around Australia, children, parents, teachers, creators and literature professionals eagerly await the news: Who will win the Book of the Year? These Awards and the Notables List which accompanies them are used by many as both a reading and a buying guide because they exemplify the best Australian books published for children in each calendar year. Looking back over the CBCA Awards, it is easy to see how much has changed in the world of children's literature, and also how fortunate we are to have such cultural wealth. This legacy must be protected at all costs.

As writing, illustrating and publishing literature for Australian children becomes more prodigious and diverse, adjustments to the structure and procedures of the Awards are called for to reflect those changes. Recognising this need, The Strategic Plan, adopted by the CBCA in 2007, placed the 'Strategic Development of the Awards' as one of the five key strategies in 2007 - 2010 for the CBCA to achieve its mission: "*Engaging the community with literature for young Australians*". The two action plans include giving consideration to the development and restructuring of both the Awards and the judging process.

Change is often instigated by challenges to the suitability of texts to categories or age groups, a conflict of ideas, accompanied by intense and sometimes heated discussion. Although these change processes may be painful, they serve as a refocussing on the purpose of the Awards and their relevance to our Australian and international audiences. In the end, clarity and resolution can be reached.

The commitment of each Judge of the **CBCA Book of the Year Awards**, whether as a member of the Interstate panel or of the Eve Pownall panel, as well as the Awards Coordinators, is to be commended. Thank you for your passion for Australian children's literature and for your dedication to such a challenging task.

Thanks also go to the members of the Awards Handbook sub-committee and their coordinator, Jo Goodman, for their time and attention given to perfecting the information contained in this book. This updated Handbook, with its detail and minutiae of rules and procedures, helps ensure that the annual process of judging the Awards is as fully informed and consistent as possible.

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