

Thank you to the Children's Book Council of Australia for presenting me with the Nan Chauncy Award for 2023. I was very surprised to find out that I was to receive the award earlier this year and have been amazed and very touched by the incredible number of people who have congratulated me, including the speed at which this high tea booked out.

This is a prestigious award presented in honour of highly respected Tasmanian author Nan Chauncy and many inspiring people have received it since it began in 1983. I have been fortunate to have met many of them over the years, and to have worked with our own Qld recipients James Moloney, and Dr. Robyn Sheahan-Bright, as well as working closely and being inspired by Lesley Reece and Dr. Belle Alderman. So, to add my name to this prestigious list is truly humbling. I am now inspired to take a trip to Tasmania to visit Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary and view the settings for some of Nan's books. When I read, **They Found a Cave**, I had no idea of the backstory to Nan writing this book, so when I explored the online images of Chauncy Vale it was wonderful to see the settings from the book brought to life and realise how the environment in which she grew up, had inspired her work.

I have not journeyed alone to get to this point of being presented with the Nan Chauncy Award. I learnt so much as a member of the Rural Youth in Rosewood in the early 1970s with half the members from the farming community and the other half being teachers. That's when I first started organising events.

I was inspired to become a teacher-librarian after my first encounter with Phil Townsend in Mareeba in 1974 when he introduced me to many amazing books such as **I am David**. It was at Kelvin Grove in 1976 that I first met our lecturer Lyn Linning who really exposed me to so many different genres. It was the first time I read fantasy and science fiction.

My first TL role was at Rosewood Secondary Department and the TL networks provided even more inspiration. The Ipswich TL network was an amazing group of passionate people. It is sad to see so few teacher-librarians left in our Ipswich schools and with their numbers in decline across the state and indeed across the country, I fear for the future of the profession and the roll-on effect of not having those passionate promoters of story sharing their love and inspiring young readers.

There have been three committees I have worked with over the years and without whose support and inspiration I could not have achieved as much as I have.

The CBCA Qld Branch committee have been unwavering in their support for the Readers Cup competition that has been such a wonderful event bringing thousands of children and books together for 20 years ago. I have held many positions on this committee since 1989, although I became a member back in the 70's when I became a TL. But it is the Readers Cup that has probably had the greatest impact since it

began in 2004. The concept of a statewide CBCA Qld Readers Cup emerged when the Qld Branch looked for ways to celebrate turning 50 in 2004. Diane Lyons was one of the first coordinators and without regional coordinators such as Fiona Eastwood who has been there since its inception, it simply would not operate. Without the support of my Readers Cup committee helping write the questions and judge the competitions, it would not happen. Without the authors supporting the competition as quizmasters, it would not be as much fun.

The Qld branch is a small but dedicated and very skilled group who manage all the finances, websites, communications, and events. So, although I am being recognised for my time volunteering, there are a lot of others working behind the scenes. Without Clare and Trish looking after the high school comps and Amanda keeping the finances and website on track, it would not happen.

The Book Links committee has always supported and helped me in bringing to life many of my ideas from Travelling Suitcases to establishing Write Links. The dream is always there to establish a physical space in which story can be celebrated. The impetus for this concept also came from CBCA Qld Branch looking for ways to celebrate turning 50 in 2004. With Beth Green at the helm and support from Narelle Oliver and others, it has gone from strength to strength and when I became president in 2011, I had a solid base on which to build. I think the establishment of Write Links has been the greatest legacy of this group. Since Write Links began in 2013, we have had X members go on to have X books published. Although I called that first meeting, it is Yvonne Mes who has ably managed it for 10 years and has a great team supporting her.

The writing mentorship has set many more emerging authors on the path to publication. Multiple authors and illustrators have been promoted through Romancing the Stars. I feel very proud of what has been achieved by Book Links and hope it can continue to thrive for years to come. There is so much more I could say here, but probably Mia will ask questions to show more. And I should say here the Mia Marossan has always been an ideas person suggesting an annual lecture in children's literature, a Books Links Award, writing competitions, StoryLinks the book review website and even put forward the idea of Write Links as the name for the new writing group at the initial meeting.

Next, I'd like to thank the committee members past and present of the **Ipswich District Teacher-Librarian Network** for their support. Without their dedication and hard work, we would not have been able to run our StoryArts Festival Ipswich free for children since 1995. It took many author tours and workshops for young writers and illustrators before the Ipswich Festival of Children's Literature emerged in 1995. Again, I acknowledge that the original idea came from a network member Lindy

McKeown. I grabbed that thought and worked out how to make it happen. Different members took on roles of managing bookings, volunteering at the festival and some have even taken long service leave in recent years so they can spend the full week there volunteering. Gone are the days when their principals allowed them to go in school time. Many of our volunteers are now coming from the Write Links group as the numbers of TLs in our network has declined so much.

The name Ipswich District-Teacher Librarian Network no longer really defines us. As of next year, there are likely to be only two teacher-librarians actually from Ipswich attending our meetings. Others from Brisbane along with some retired TLs have been boosting our numbers.

This makes it more and more difficult to create our annual publication to support Children's Book Week. Sales have declined since it began in 1991 and at the peak, we were publishing 3200 copies, while now we are down to just over 1000. This I think reflects the decline in teacher-librarians across Australia combined with an increase of Children's Book Week related ideas shared via social media and websites. It will be interesting to see how much longer we continue, as the income from this publication fund the festival.

I have a huge list of author and illustrator contacts which I started to develop in the 1980s. I used to have my students read a book and write to an author to respond to the book. I think I got a greater surprise than the student when Peter Dickinson replied from the UK. People often ask me if I would like to write but I always reply that I am a reader and a promoter but not a writer.

So, to the many authors and illustrators I have encountered and worked with over the years, thank you. There are a few in the audience today who I will pick out for mention but many others that I could talk about that have influenced and inspired me over the years.

In chronological order:

In 1991 I toured author Nigel Grey and illustrator Ann James to my small regional schools. When Pamela Rushby heard about the tour, she invited us all to her house for dinner so they could chat, because she was planning to write a book. There were not many opportunities to meet authors from interstate back then.

Josie Montano came to the festival in the late 90's looking for inspiration. She has been back many times as presenter and MC and I had the privilege of launching her picture book with Matt Ottley.

I first met Aleesah Darlison when she entered our Ipswich Festival of Children's Literature write a picture book competition and then came back later to present at the festival as a published author. We stopped running it when CYA Conference

started doing the same, but ours was the first competition that I am aware of. Leonie Tyle at UQP used to judge it.

Peter Carnavas has been a regular SAFI author, but I also work with him in his role as regional coordinator of the Sunshine Coast. Region Readers cup

Yvonne Mes attended the very first meeting I called for people wanting to break into writing for children. Write Links was formed, and Yvonne has played a key role ever since. She also launched her first book at StoryArts Festival Ipswich.

When I organised a Book Week event at State Library a few years back, Anil Tortop did a session on digital illustration, and I was the first person ever to ask her to sign a copy of her new picture book. Anil now does the illustrations for the IDTL Book Week publication.

Finally, I want to thank my family. It all goes back to my mother. She told stories and rhymes to me and my siblings from a very young age. I grew up surrounded by a collection of ancient classics that had belonged to my grandfather and a mother who was an avid reader who dreamed of me one day becoming the town librarian. I came close to this when I opened the Rosewood State School Library to the public one night a week for 10 years from 1978 to 1987.

My last thank you and the most important is to my sister Shirley who hates being thanked but her enormous contribution needs to be acknowledged. She is the logistics person who knows how to solve the myriad practical problems that can threaten to derail an event. She is always there working quietly in the background making sure events go smoothly. She is also the one who makes sure that I am ok, looking after me as I work away all day on my computer. Thank you, Shirley, I couldn't have done it without you.

If I worked alone to try to do the things I have done over the years, it would not have happened. It really needs the support of many, many people from that passionate world of children's literature.