



## THE NAN CHAUNCY AWARD 2025 CITATION FOR WENDY RAPEE

Wendy Rapee is the 2025 recipient of the prestigious Nan Chauncy Award, which honours individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the field of Australian children's literature.

Wendy embodies the spirit of this award and deserves to be widely recognised for her passionate advocacy, courageous leadership, and sustained contribution to children's literature and literacy in Australia spanning more than four decades.

Driven by her belief in the power of stories to foster strong culture and social cohesion, Wendy is committed to helping young people access quality stories, and ensuring that creators are heard and celebrated. Through her education, publishing, and volunteer roles she has developed strong connections and is a compelling voice for inclusive storytelling and the transformative power of reading.

### **Accomplishments**

After achieving academic qualifications in Sociology (BA English/History/Sociology) and Librarianship (BA Library & Information Science), Wendy began her career as a librarian at an independent school.

Her background in education laid the groundwork for her transition to the educational publishing sector, where she has held diverse roles including in sales, marketing, editorial, and production management.

She founded her own editorial, design, and production business, working with prestigious clients such as the Australian Museum, *The School Magazine*, Scholastic Australia, and the publishing division of the NSW Independent Education Union (NSW IEU). Her portfolio includes the development of acclaimed projects, including:

- **"Yarning Strong" (Series 1 & 2):** A series designed to enhance the literacy skills of Indigenous students, promoting cultural understanding and respect.
- **"My Mum's Got Cancer" (Jane Curry Publishing):** A sensitive narrative that addresses the challenges faced by families dealing with illness, helping children to understand and process difficult emotions.
- **"A Spectacular Hat" by Libby Gleeson (NSW Cancer Council):** A story that promotes awareness of cancer and encourages discussions around health and wellbeing.
- **"Primary Connections" (Australian Academy of Science):** An award-winning educational program that integrates science and literacy, and received the Australian Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing.

Wendy is also a former General Manager of the Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA).

### Length of Involvement

A copy of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* given to Wendy for her third birthday inspired a lifelong love of children's literature, and her commitment to promoting and supporting children's literacy in both professional and voluntary roles over four decades. Her contribution to the sector has been guided by a strong desire to champion reading for pleasure and nurture a culture of storytelling among young people.

Wendy has been an active member of the CBCA since joining the NSW Branch in 2001. Her extensive contribution was recognised with CBCA Life Membership in 2021. At a branch level, Wendy's leadership roles include Vice President and editor/designer of several publications including *Book Beat*, *Book Buzz* and *iREAD*. Wendy has twice served as NSW Director on the CBCA Board (2013 – 2016 and 2020 – 2024).

### National Initiatives

Wendy's enduring impact is particularly evident through her inclusive and collaborative leadership as the National Chair of the CBCA from 2020 to 2024.

She assumed the role at a time of significant change globally, locally and for the CBCA. During her tenure, Wendy faced the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and effectively ensured the continuity and growth of the CBCA's activities.

As National Chair, she worked tirelessly to reinvigorate the CBCA with positive change and refocused the organisation by keeping its mission to connect, communicate, celebrate, and advocate for the value of stories central to every action.

This strengthening of national cohesion by aligning the Board with member branches, by embracing new ideas, and by guiding the development of a new strategic plan all

contributed to successfully repositioning the CBCA in a rapidly evolving publishing and education environment.

Significant among her achievements:

- As a champion of innovation, Wendy played a pivotal role in establishing the **CBCA Shadow Judging Book of the Year Awards** as a national program in 2022 to give young people a voice in the judging process and ensure the Book of the Year Awards remain relevant to young readers.
- Wendy's strong commitment to education and collaboration is illustrated by her collaboration with Alyson Simpson from the University of Sydney in creating a program of online modules that she called **Illuminating Australian Children's Literature**, designed to help adults engage with high-quality Australian children's literature through discussion based on BOYA shortlisted titles.
- Wendy's proficiency in graphic design and marketing can be seen in a range of innovative **Children's Book Week merchandise** which has fostered excitement around reading among children, parents, teachers, and librarians.
- **Curious Creatures, Wild Minds at Taronga Zoo:** Wendy collaborated with the NSW Branch to secure a grant for a virtual event that connected children's authors and illustrators with young audiences, and ensured that, despite challenging times, literature remained accessible.

Wendy continues to contribute to the CBCA nationally in her roles as a member of the Awards and Governance subcommittees and National Shadow Judging Convenor.

### Advocacy

Wendy is a passionate advocate for inclusive storytelling. She has served as a judge for various prestigious awards, including the Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing and the Australian Publishers Association Design Awards. Through her public commentary and op-eds, she contributes to discussions on the importance of children's literature in fostering literacy and cultural understanding.

### Conclusion

Overall, Wendy Rapee's extensive contributions to Australian children's literature, her impactful national leadership of the CBCA, and her dedication to advocacy make her a distinguished recipient of the Nan Chauncy Award. Her work celebrates the significance of children's literature, and enhances its relevance and accessibility, ensuring that young readers are inspired and engaged with stories that matter.

## **Nancy Chancy Award Coordinator**

Dr Mark Macleod (Tasmanian Branch)

## **Committee Judges**

Terry Fahy (NSW Branch)

Bec Pease (NT Branch)

Rachael Hind (ACT Branch)

## **References**

### **Testimonials for 2025 Nancy Chauncy Award**

Prof Alyson Simpson, University of Sydney, Sydney School of Education and Social Work  
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Jane Moore, CBCA Vice Chair and CBCA SA Director E | [jane.moore@cbca.org.au](mailto:jane.moore@cbca.org.au)

Christine Oughtred, CBCA Victoria Past President; 2020 Leila St John Award E |  
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### **Evidential websites**

*Magpies* vol.39 |

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Shadow Judging |

<https://shadowjudging.cbca.org.au>

Illuminating Children's Literature |

<https://cbca.org.au/illuminating-australian-childrens-literature/>