



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S

LAUREATE

PROJECT

2012-13





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Project Background

Formed in 2008, the Australian Children's Literature Alliance (ACLA) is a not-for-profit venture to provide a national spokesperson – the Australian Children's Laureate – to promote the power of story, influence the reading habits of Australian children and families, and champion young Australians' reading.

Since December 2011, with the official launch of the Laureate Program, the inaugural co-Laureates, Alison Lester and Boori Monty Prior have traversed the country inspiring children, families and educators. As national and international ambassadors for Australian literature, the Laureates promote the value and importance of reading, creativity and story in the lives of young Australians.

With a national touring program and through media and online advocacy, the Laureates encourage an active literary culture, promoting reading for enjoyment, wellbeing and life success. They also work especially to promote reading and books to children in disadvantaged and remote communities.

The Laureates

Boori Monty Pryor's father is from the Birrigubba of the Bowen region and his mother from Yarrabah (near Cairns), a descendant of the Kungganji and Kukuimudji. Boori has written award-winning books with Meme McDonald including *Maybe Tomorrow*, *My Girragundji*, *The Binna Binna Man* and *Njunjul the Sun*. His picture book collaboration with Jan Ormerod, *Shake a Leg*, won the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction in 2011 and is on the Queensland curriculum.

Boori's stories are about finding strength within to deal with the challenges without, and his skill is to create positive visions of the future for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Alison Lester is a popular, best-selling and award-winning author/illustrator. Over a thirty-year career she has produced such classics as *Magic Beach* and *Imagine*, winning multiple CBCA awards and nominations and gaining a shortlisting for *Running with the Horses* for the 2010 Prime Minister's Literary Awards. *Are We There Yet?* was chosen as focus book for the 2012 National Year of Reading program.

Her picture books mix imaginary worlds with everyday life, encouraging children to believe in themselves and celebrate the differences that make them special. Alison is involved in many community art projects and spends part of every year travelling to remote Indigenous communities.



Laureates in Conversation, National Library of Dublin, Irish Tour with Niamh Sharkey (Laureate na nOg/Ireland) and event Chair, Dr. Pdraic Whyte.



The official Children's Laureate launch at Carclew Youth Arts, South Australia



The Australian Children's Laureate Irish Tour launch at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast, Boori Monty Pryor, Minister Junior Jonathan Bell, Alison Lester.

The Australian Children's Laureate: putting reading and books in the spotlight for young Australians



AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S LAUREATE – OCTOBER 2013

Following the first year of the Laureates' inaugural appointment, in 2013 Alison Lester and Boori Monty Pryor have spent 86 days touring the country, working with an estimated 15,000 children/families in over 100 locations. Nearly 350 media hits have been achieved, 50 blog posts written, as well as many online articles and interviews. The Laureates have developed their 'special projects': Alison's: a collaborative book project by Alison and the children of Australia, *This is My Place*. Boori's: and a documentary film based on Boori's life - *Storykeepers* – a collaboration with Meme McDonalds and Youthworx.



The international Laureate Summit, Bologna Children's Book Fair 2013: Siobhán Parkinson (Ireland, first Laureate), Johan Unenge (Sweden), Niamh Sharkey (Current Irish Laureate), Boori Monty Pryor and Alison Lester (Australia) and Cay Corneliussen (event Chair, Swedish Arts Council).

The Laureate Support Team

Patron Noni Hazlehurst

EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Andrew Wilkins (VIC) Wilkins Farago Children's Publishers, ACLA Chair
- Ann James (VIC) Australian Society of Authors / Books Illustrated
- Andrew Kelly (VIC) Wild Dog Books, ACLA Treasurer
- Maureen Brooks (ACT) National Library of Australia / Indigenous Literacy Foundation
- Laurine Croasdale (NSW) Australian Society of Authors, Literature Live
- Jane Covernton (SA) Working Title Press
- Robyn Sheahan-Bright (QLD) Justified Text Writing and Publishing Consultancy services.

STATE SUB-COMMITTEES

In addition to the executive board by the end of 2013 ACLA hopes to adopt the model of the SA ACLA Planning Committee in every state. This will be based on the strength and success of the ACLA program in SA with its dynamic and innovative partnerships. The Board draws upon the skills and expertise of these experienced committee members for advice on fundings, events and partnerships to best suit each individual Laureate program.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

For the past two years the administration of the Laureate project

has been ably managed by Project Manager Justine Alltimes. In February 2013 ACLA conceded the need to extend the working hours of the Project Officer from two days to three days, to cope with the growing demand for the Laureate Program. As a result business consultant, Geri Barr, agreed to share the role of Project Manager with Justine. Both are working one day each on a paid basis and one day between them on a voluntary basis until further funding is secured with the ultimate goal being a five days a week paid position.

IN-KIND SUPPORT

In-kind support is given by volunteer board members, the Australian Booksellers Association, the Australian Society of Authors, Books Illustrated, the Children's Publishing Committee of the Australian Publishers' Association, the Australian School Libraries Association, Carclew Youth Arts, The Little Big Book Club, Micador Group, Penguin Books Australia and Allen & Unwin. Many local groups and organisations have also partnered with ACLA all over Australia to coordinate the touring program.

FUNDING BODIES

The support of the following generous funding bodies has enabled the Laureates to bring many children into the circle of story: Arts Council of Northern Ireland; The Australia Council for the Arts; Australian Government Office for the Arts; Australian Publishers' Association; CAGES Foundation; Children's Book Council of Australia; CA Cultural Fund; The Department for Education and Child Development South Australia; and The State Library of Victoria.

Sponsors/Funding Bodies



Partners



PROJECT AIMS

The aim of the Children's Laureate Project is to create a better Australia through increasing literacy for young people, the disadvantaged and Indigenous communities. Children Australia-wide, rich and poor, advantaged and disadvantaged, rural and city-based are participating in a wide variety of events, functions and workshops directly aimed at developing reading and literacy skills, enhancing a love of literature and establishing the worth and importance of becoming a writer or illustrator.

2012-13 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Public Events — Touring Program

To date, the Laureates have spent 86 days touring the country from Perth to Geraldton (WA), from APY Lands (SA), to Bruny Island (TAS), participating in public events aimed at children and the general public, particularly those who are not already committed to reading, and with an emphasis on regional and remote communities. As well, they have participated in an international touring program to China, Italy, Southern and Northern Ireland and London, UK.

HIGHLIGHTS

In January, Alison participated in **The Big Draw Newcastle**. Alison held public drawing workshops at the Newcastle Region Library where 400 children were involved with drawing activities including Alison's Antarctic-themed wall mural inspired by her exhibition, **KIDS ANTARCTIC ART**.

In early April, Boori toured **Queanbeyan, Dickson and Woden regional libraries** as part of his **ACT Laureate tour** in collaboration with the **National Library**. This tour included a Whole School Read-Aloud event in the Indigenous Reconciliation garden at **Turner Primary School**.

In May, Alison and Boori separately toured South Australia. Alison created books with remote schools in APY Lands with

Carclew Youth Arts and Boori presented the Key Note Speech 'Light the Fire in Literacy' at the **Come Out Festival**, as well as carrying out Storytelling workshops at the State Library of South Australia and outer-metropolitan libraries.

In May, as part of his three-day **VIC tour** Boori carried out Storycrafting workshops for the **Jumbunna Film Festival** run by kids at the **Royal Children's Hospital** (which made Channel 10 News). From there Boori and the **State Library of Victoria** team drove up to Shapparton and Mooroopna for story and dance workshops with Indigenous teenagers at **ASHE** (Academy of Sport, Health and Education) and the **Batja Malnigan dance group** at Mooroopna Secondary College.

Public Events — Major Book Events

HIGHLIGHTS

Alison participated in **The Wheeler Centre Gala 2013: Where the Wild Things Are** where she spoke to an audience of over 1400 people: *'It's often the wild things they do that stay with them as adults, that leave them feeling powerful'* - was a popular tweet from the event titled 'Alison Lester on bringing up kids.'

In April 2013, Boori was a special guest at the Children's Book Council of Australia (**CBCA**) Shortlist Announcement and a guest speaker at the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (**ALEA**) ACT Branch Dinner, Canberra 2013.

In July 2013, Boori presented his stories at the **Whitsunday Voices Youth Literature Festival**, *Tell Me a Story*.

In November 2013 Alison will launch the **Museum of Contemporary Art's** new Art and Literacy Schools Program, including a presentation of her Laureate Project, *This is My Place*.



Meet with VIPs and attend special one-off events

HIGHLIGHTS

Alison and Boori were guests of honour at the **Inaugural International Laureate Summit** held at the **Bologna Children's Book Fair 2013**, during its 50th Anniversary Year. Hosted by 2013 Focus Country, Sweden, this public event introduced children's book authors, artists, publishers and agents to 5 of the most internationally acclaimed authors and illustrators. The Laureates discussed their individual ambitions in the role as well as advocating that - 'all children have the right to culture.'

Special Laureate guests included: Siobhán Parkinson (Ireland, first Laureate), Johan Unenge (Swedish Reading Ambassador), Niamh Sharkey (Current Irish Laureate), Boori Monty Pryor and Alison Lester (Australian Children's Laureates).

After four days of events at Bologna Children's Book Fair the Laureates were invited as special guests of the Northern Ireland Arts Council to tour Belfast, Derry and Dublin. *Read the International Touring Report for more information.*

Melissa Squire of Honey Bee Books blog, ACT:
'I know this storytelling experience will have a lasting impact on me and my children. In fact, Emily was so taken by [Boori] that she actually had a chat to him after the session, which really surprised me as she is always so shy.'

Alison Lester's blog, APY Lands Tour, SA:
'It was great to see the Kenmore Park, kids again and they were thrilled to receive a class set of the book that they made yesterday. They also made some postcards using our 'Australian Children's Laureate' postcard stamp, and a few of the girls wrote to their families down at Yalata and will send the postcards in the mail.'

Bridie MacKay: Royal Children's Hospital, Communications, Events and Projects Coordinator Education Institute, VIC:
'A young boy in the Kelpie ward has been begging teachers and other staff today to bring him books by Boori. Apparently nothing else will do.'



Public Campaign

The Laureates work to share their enthusiasm and publicly campaign for reading, to inspire children and young adults to become avid readers.

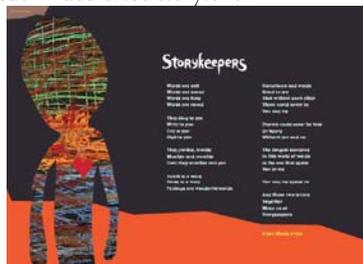
A special **Laureate poster** has been sent out to schools and libraries all over Australia, and every venue that holds a Laureate event receives extra posters for display.

ACLA sends out a 3-monthly **Newsletter** to **over 600 Laureate supporters** outlining: projects, recent tour highlights and upcoming events. Both Laureates are dedicated to keeping the **Laureate website** up-to-date, with regular blog posts and feedback from schools and libraries. We are engaging with a number of popular book and child-orientated blogs for **'blog tours'**, to further extend the Laureates' reach. Our *YouTube* channel has proven particularly popular, reflecting a medium that young people respond to immediately.

Advocacy

As with their first year, each Laureate has made significant progress with their **personal project**, driven by their individual notions of place and belonging and how this relates to story. They have taken workshops to promote and develop their projects, and initial funding has enabled them to establish and work with dedicated teams, locate appropriate resources, produce project outlines, and develop budgets and timelines.

Boori Monty Pryor is working with an expert team in creating a film to document Boori's unique work over the last 20 years: *Storykeepers* will offer an insight into his inspirational performance workshops, as well as his personal story, which led him to become such a dedicated storyteller.



Laureate website

The Storykeepers Poem has also been an inspiration to many of the schools Boori has worked with over the last two years.

The full Storykeepers pitch is available at the Children's



Alison Lester is working on a book focused on the theme of hope: *'We are Australia/This Is My Place'*. This collection of works by around 60 Australian children from all over the country will talk about their lives, what makes them special, as well as their hopes and dreams. Alison is working with kids from Mornington Island (NT) to APY Lands (SA) to draw, paint and photograph and talk about their lives.

ACLA has created simple project sheets for schools, libraries and families to get involved with the Laureates' projects, and is encouraging children to send in their own work inspired by these projects to show on the website.

Special project information sheets are available for viewing on the Laureate website.

PR and Media

The Laureates and the touring program have received substantial and diverse media coverage nationwide since the launch in December 2011, including over 300 unique 'traditional' media hits, encouraging and increasing the visibility of reading and book initiatives around the country.

In 2013 a publicist from Penguin Books Australia dedicates a day a week to Laureate media, working closely with our project managers to ensure distribution of media releases and coverage on our website and social media channels. A focus of our ongoing media is to engender discussion around the importance of reading, books and creativity in the lives of children, with a targeted campaign in regional and remote areas.

Substantial **international media** coverage was achieved as a result of the Laureate tour across Italy, Ireland and London including a detailed article about the Laureate project and tour in *Magpies Magazine*, volume 28, written by Robyn Sheahan-Bright.

http://www.childrenslaureate.org.au/
Youtube: <http://www.Youtube.com/user/AustralianLaureate>
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Childrens-Laureate/291140750928987>

Website

Developed and managed by ACLA, the Children's Laureate website is directed particularly at children; it promotes and reflects the Laureates' activities and projects, and celebrates reading and books. An up-to-date and inspirational experience for visitors, it's proving popular: an introductory film made about the Laureates has now received **904 views**.

With links to our dedicated YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest and Facebook pages, we are greatly extending the Laureates' reach and audience – spaces where the Laureates can 'meet' children they can't visit in person – with 'Meet the Laureates' video, project pages and wikispaces where schools, libraries, and families can take part in the Laureate Project.



Boori Monty Pryor on Channel 10, 5 o'Clock News



Alison Lester interviewed by reporter Liu Wenwen on CCTV News as part of Australian Writers' Week in Beijing.

See the Laureate website for twelve year old Ben Jones' video review of Boori's book *Maybe Tomorrow* – a link that has been shared extensively via social media.





AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S LAUREATE REGIONAL AND REMOTE TOURING

Feedback from Laureate events shows the impact of activities outside of the major cities has enormous potential. We see the bush telegraph in action, with new and prospective partners sharing their excitement about Laureate activities across Australia.

Across their two year project Alison and Boori participated in 70 regional and remote events across all states, from Mornington Island State School, Garma Festival and Shepparton VIC, to having kids connecting to live workshops by Alison and Boori across the remotest areas in NT via School of the Air.



The teens at ASHE in Shepparton become besties with @OzLaureate Boori Monty Pryor - Anna Burkey, State Library of Victoria (via Twitter)

Academy of Sport, Health and Education Quote:

'The session with Boori was great. He not only talked about his career but his entire life too. He was very fun and kept us all on edge.'

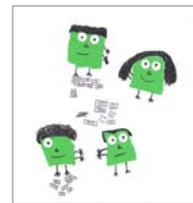
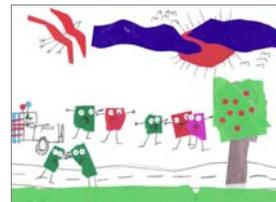
Regional and Remote Events

HIGHLIGHTS - THE FIGHTING TOWN

One project that really stood out from Alison and Boori's regional and remote touring was Lester's book making project in Borroloola, NT. Here is Alison's story about the book on the Laureate blog:

The kids were telling me that lots of people refer to Borroloola as 'the fighting town', because there was a lot of fighting going on there. This made the kids feel sad so we decided to make a book about things that cause fights. The adults thought this was a great idea too so we worked really hard and made a book called "The Fighting Town".

In the book there was lots of yelling and the people had been fighting for so long they actually had forgotten what they were fighting about. The Rainbow Serpent hears all this fighting and decides to visit to see what is going on. The final book we made was called 'Borroloola Stories'.



Pages from *The Fighting Book*

THE STORY CONTINUES JAN 2014 – DEC 2015



Jackie French Australian Children's Laureate For 2014/2015

Jackie French, best-selling author of over 140 books, including the iconic *Diary of a Wombat* and *Hitler's Daughter*, has been announced as the Australian Children's Laureate for 2014 – 2015. The theme for Jackie's two-year term as Australian Children's Laureate will be 'Share a Story'.

'There are a million ways to share a story,' Jackie says. 'To read to a child on your lap; to have a child read to you while you cook dinner; to read to the dog when it has to go to the vet to calm it (or you!) down; to join a storytelling session at your library. You can also tell your grandchildren what life was like when you were young over the phone or Skype or read to thousands of people via video conferencing.'

Stories tell us who we are. They teach us empathy so we understand who others are. They give us the power to imagine and create the future.'

The advantage of having a single Laureate for the second term is that it will allow the general public to focus on the role of the Laureate, which in turn will help to raise the profile and the value of the Laureate's contribution to Australian children's literature in our society.



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TOUR 2013

The 2013 SA Laureate program has been broad-reaching, dynamic and highly visible. Between them, the two co-Laureates, Alison Lester and Boori Pryor, met with more than 500 school children from 13 different schools, and over 300 teachers, librarians and parents during the 8 days they were in the State. A special exhibition on the life and works of Boori Pryor hosted by the State Library of SA attracted a further 400 school children from 5 metropolitan schools.

The SA Acla Planning Committee

The strength and success of the ACLA program in SA lies in its dynamic and innovative partnerships. Not least of these is the relationship between ACLA and the Department for Education and Child Development, which has created a benchmark for ACLA committees in other states. By the end of 2013 ACLA hopes to adopt the model of the SA ACLA Planning Committee in every state and to forge strong links with other state education departments.

During the past two years, SA students, teachers, librarians, families and communities have all benefited from the collaboration between ACLA and DECD, and the two organisations' shared commitment to improving literacy and fostering a love of reading among young children:

- Jane Governton, SA ACLA Board member and publisher;
- Carmel Jones, Project Manager, Premier's Reading Challenge, Department for Education and Child Development;
- Tricia Walton, Chief Executive, Carclew Youth Arts;
- Sue Hill, General Manager, The Little Big Book Club;
- Phil Cummings, SA author who joined the committee in February 2013.

SA PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Workshops with Alison Lester - APY Lands 5-9 May 2013



In May 2013 Alison Lester was invited by Carclew Youth Arts (Aboriginal Arts Development) and the Anangu Education Services and Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee to conduct a series of interactive book making workshops on the APY Lands as part of the Tjitjiku Inma Project.

The workshops were based on Alison's Laureate project, 'This is My Place', which encourages children around Australia to write and illustrate stories and postcards about where they live. Children, staff and elders from the Ernabella and Kenmore Park communities were taken through the process of making a book - from writing and illustrating a story, through to the design, production and printing of the final work. At the end of each workshop students were presented with a class set of the book they had made.

Alison: "The Kenmore Park kids ... were thrilled to receive a class set of the book that they made yesterday. They also made some postcards using our Australian Children's Laureate postcard stamp, and a few of the girls wrote to their families down at Yalata and will send the postcards in the mail."



Creating This is My Place artworks, Ernabella Anangu School 2013

Boori Monty Pryor - 2013 Come Out Festival 26-28 May 2013

In late May Boori Pryor teamed up with the Come Out Festival in a series of public and school events, including two workshops for children and parents at the State Library of SA, four interactive sessions with school students at the Playford, Marion and Onkaparinga Libraries. A highlight of the tour was Boori's Keynote Address, entitled "Light the Fire in Literacy", presented to an audience of over 220 teachers, librarians and the general public at the Dunstan Play House.

This event, which was introduced by the Chief Executive of DECD, Keith Bartley (see photo below) explored the relevance of Indigenous storytelling for children today, and highlighted the importance of drawing them into the world of story through, performance, dance, music and painting.



Boori Pryor and Chief Executive of DECD, Keith Bartley, Courtesy of Jeremy Watson Photography - Hannah Tunstill

Lorna Crisanti, Teacher Librarian, Elizabeth East Primary: 'Thank you all for allowing the students and staff of Elizabeth East Primary the opportunity to work with Boori Pryor. Both students and staff thought it was an amazing performance which helped us start Reconciliation Week on a high note [...] Boori's passion for his culture is infectious and we had a great time. We just need more copies of Shake a Leg now as the students have not stopped asking for it.'

Lee-Ann Buckskin, Carclew, Manager, Aboriginal Arts Development SA: 'It's very exciting to have someone with Alison's reputation join us on such an important and significant project.'





OVERSEAS TOURING

During their term as Laureate their immense contributions to Australian literature and its reputation overseas have also been evident. For in February 2013, Alison was an invited guest at **Australian Writers' Week, Beijing, China**, where Books Illustrated had also included her work in the *Hello! from Australia* exhibition. Alison's video interview (Liu Wen Wen, 2013) reveals her excitement about working with children there, and the passionate local reception of her work. Her *Noni the Pony* was also recently appreciatively reviewed in *The New York Times* (Paul, 2013).



Capital Library, Beijing, hosts of the 'Hello! from Australia' exhibition (Alison's art in the background).

International Laureate Focus

Over the last few years, Laureates have also been appointed in Ireland and Sweden, and in March this year both Boori and Alison travelled to the Bologna Children's Book Fair in its 50th anniversary year to participate in a Laureate summit with their Swedish and Irish counterparts. They shared ideas such as the Swedish Laureate's plans to create a digital TV station dedicated to children's books and they all backed the belief that 'all children have the right to culture.'

The Bologna program organisers now wish to make this a **biennial focus**, aiming to encourage more countries to establish their own laureates and participate in such summits. Ann James from Books Illustrated and on the ACLA Board says that the *momentum was infectious*.

As well as meeting visitors at the Australian Publishers Stand and the Books Illustrated 'Hello! from Australia' exhibition, Alison



Siobhán Parkinson (Ireland, first Laureate), Johan Unenge (Sweden), Niamh Sharkey (Current Irish Laureate), Boori Monty Pryor and Alison Lester (Australia).

and Boori were special guests at the Allen & Unwin 25th anniversary dinner where each of the 60 guests received one of their books. As a surprise Boori performed his *Shake a Leg* story encouraging international publishing guests to join in (chosen as a **Publishers Weekly 2013 Fair highlight**). Alison's recent picture book *Sophie Scott Goes South* was also chosen for the highly prestigious White Raven Catalogue 2013.



Boori performing as a special guest at the Allen & Unwin 25th Anniversary Dinner, 2013

The Irish Tour

The Laureates then headed to Ireland in early April, courtesy of the **Northern Ireland Arts Council** and **Children's Books Ireland**.

The tour launch was celebrated at the **Crescent Arts Centre**, Belfast, passionately opened by Roisin McDonough, Chief Executive of the Arts Council Northern Ireland, followed by Junior Minister Jonathan Bell. Kids and families enjoyed an afternoon of creative Easter Monday story-themed workshops with the Australian Laureates.

Next stop Derry. After an early morning BBC radio interview they headed to the **Verbal Arts Centre**, Derry, for a Q&A with Irish TV celebrity host, **Joe Mahon**. Photographs from their tours across Australia including examples of kids' artwork left the audience in awe. Alison's Rodeo book projects in Borroloola were a particular surprise - most of the audience had no idea that rodeo existed in Australia.

Then Children's Books Ireland organised a *Laureates In Conversation* at the **National Library of Ireland, Dublin**. We heard about Niamh Sharkey's *Monster Doodles with Kids*, and how her hometown of Skerries made it a year of illustration, providing free studio space and artist residencies.

As seen to the right, promotion of the tour was excellent with many **international media hits** and a beautifully designed print program and banner for the Irish Tour.

Before flying home we had lunch with the UK Laureate team sharing experiences from the tour and the past year.

These meetings and appearances will be invaluable in **cementing links** between our respective countries and promoting Australian literature.



Alison and workshop attendees holding up their *This is My Place* postcards at Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast.

Damian Smyth, Head of Literature & Drama, Arts Council of Northern Ireland:

'Everyone they met was bowled over by the charisma of your Laureates and how they do so well at everything that was promised by Laureateship.'

