

Children tell Commissioner to cover books in Nutella to encourage more reading

SA Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, has today launched her latest report with a title that comes direct from a child's imagination. **Cover Books in Nutella** was one of many fun ideas children contributed on ways to encourage them to read more books.

The launch of the report coincides with the start of this year's Adelaide Writers' Week, marking twelve months since the Commissioner presented her Children's Stories event in partnership with the **Australian Children's Laureate Foundation** and **Children's University Adelaide (CUA)**.

Under the guidance of **Ursula Dubosarsky, Australia's Children's Laureate for 2020-2021**, and **SA children's author and illustrator, Andrew Joyner**, approximately **100 children aged 8 – 10 years** assembled in the Mortlock Chamber of the State Library to participate in the **Commissioner's Children's Stories** event. The aim was to build their confidence in expressing their own ideas by learning how to tap into their imagination and creativity through activities that enabled them to experience how this is achieved.

While learning these critical skills the Commissioner asked children for their ideas on how to encourage more children to read. They told her they were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about books and that the activity of reading is one of their favourites. They said if adults wanted children to read more they should allow them to do it while engaged in play because 'reading passes time, calms you down, distracts you from worries and helps you to learn more'.

Other ideas they had ranged from having more visits to libraries, creating opportunities to read as a group, and participating in read-a-thons that offer prizes for teams rather than individuals. They wanted reading to be made more fun and inclusive with ideas that showed kindness and support of their peers. One child suggested publishing more books with yellow pages so that children with dyslexia could enjoy reading more. Another suggested the government 'make a TV advertisement showing how fun reading is' and said 'publishing more books with activities inside' would also work.

**Commissioner for
Children & Young People**

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Literacy development is often considered to be in the domain of adult educators, with children seen as passive receivers of information. Encouraging children to participate in decisions around literacy through reading, writing and sharing their ideas, helps validate their role as storytellers. The report sends a strong message to parents and educators that literacy development is not just about being a passive receiver of information. Becoming literate is also about participation and helping to develop a greater understanding of what literacy can do for you – what the benefits of developing skills such as reading, writing and storytelling are, and how this creates opportunities throughout life.

Quotes attributable to Commissioner Helen Connolly:

For children to be able to access opportunities and live the lives they dream of, we must do all we can to support development of their literacy skills. Children born in the 21st century are part of a generation ‘who create what they consume and consume what they create’. It’s not surprising then that their ideas for promoting reading, included writing their own stories for other children to read. By writing and reading their own stories children unlock their imaginations and hopefully develop a life-long love of reading, writing and storytelling.

Quote attributable to Children’s Laureate 2020–2021, Ursula Dubosarksy:

Libraries are the places where children learn to love to read and as Australian Children's Laureate, what I hope to do most of all is bring children and libraries together. This memorable day with the SA CCYP at the State Library of South Australia did just that – the children filled the rooms with wonder, discovery and excitement at the life-changing possibilities of books, reading and libraries.

Quote attributable to Kiri Hagenus, Managing Director, Children’s University Australasia

The Children’s University Australasia (CUA) incorporating the Children’s University Adelaide, works with children and young people to develop the understanding that learning takes place everywhere – not just in the classroom. All children have aspirations and it is our job to ensure that those aspirations are supported rather than eroded. CUA was thrilled to be part of the event.

Download the report here: <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Screen-Cover-Books-in-Nutella.pdf>

View a video summary of the event featuring comments from children participants

here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HstCG4_JOuo&feature=youtu.be

For further information about the work of the Commissioner visit:

www.ccyp.com.au

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