



Media release content

The Maurice Saxby Award 2024

The Maurice Saxby Award recognises service to children's and/or young adult literature by an individual, team or organisation that has displayed excellence and passion in promoting reading and/or writing for young people in NSW. The worthy recipient of the School Library Association of New South Wales Maurice Saxby Award for 2024 is Dr Anita Heiss.



Dr Heiss has a longstanding history of advocacy for First Nations' literature and has worked tirelessly to ensure Australian children and young people see themselves on the page in their life experiences, their skin tones, their families and realities, their ways of having fun, and their diverse lives.

Through the publication of many titles, Dr Heiss has endeavoured to ensure all Australian children have diversity in their reading and are able to connect with other kids through the things they enjoy.

As a touring author since 1996, Dr Heiss has worked with numerous groups of young people in classrooms, libraries, and community organisations across Australia, finding joy in storytime and running writing workshops. For the last five years, Dr Heiss has worked

with the Bathurst Catholic Education Office and has visited schools across its footprint on her own Wiradyuri country, running writing workshops with young people. Two other significant projects in her career include co-writing two novels with the students at La Perouse Public School and the TWUGIA project run through the NSW Dept of Education, which ran for three years and offered high-achieving Koori students in south-western Sydney the opportunity to attend a writing camp.

As a Lifetime Ambassador for the Indigenous Foundation (ILF), Dr Heiss has worked with young Indigenous people in Healesville (VIC), Katherine (NT), Tiwi Island, and in Sydney. The books published from those workshops include: *Deadly Sisters of Worawa*, *Shock 'Em: Storie of the Big River Hawks*, and *Ngingingawila Ngirramini - Our Story*. Dr Heiss has also been incredibly active in promoting the work of the ILF through speaking and fundraising events. Since 2006, she has contributed to the *BlackWords: Aboriginal and Writers and Storytellers* data set of AustLit.

Dr Heiss continues to support professional development for teachers in NSW and Qld. She is a regular keynote speaker at educational conferences, offering resources, particularly by First Nations authors, to educators. In 2023, Dr Heiss presented at the South Australian Primary School Principals' Conference, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Symposium: a Voice for Generations in the ACT, and the QLD Catholic Education Conference.

Dr Heiss' tireless and valuable work to promote reading and writing for young people in NSW reflects the objectives of the School Library Association of NSW. Members of the Association congratulate Dr Heiss on receipt of the Maurice Saxby Award.



The [School Library Association of New South Wales](#) (SLANSW) is a professional association centered on professional learning, advocacy and research. Our membership is interested in learning about, and supporting and advocating for, the importance of school libraries as a part of the K-12 educational experience.

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