



MEDIA RELEASE – Friday 11 June 2021

End of an Era for Director of The Literature Centre

As The Literature Centre approaches its 30th year Lesley Reece's own chapter as Director and Founder is closing.

For over 29 years Ms Reece has championed and promoted Australian literature; inspiring many thousands of students and teachers through stimulating programmes. Her passion and dedication has broken through the barrier of indifference to bring awareness and investment in her field.



There has been no-one more supportive or dedicated to the cause of promoting quality Australian literature for children and young adults than Ms Reece. Since establishing The Literature Centre in 1992 as a project of national significance, and housed in the old hospital of the former Fremantle Prison, Ms Reece has been celebrated as a powerhouse of determination and endurance. She has worked tirelessly to create a place renowned nationally and internationally for fostering a love of literature in young minds while nurturing the careers of Australian children's authors and illustrators and ensuring the preservation of their original manuscripts and artwork.

Ms Reece's consummate vision was to celebrate, promote and nurture Australian literature for children and young adults, and her legacy will continue.

In 2010 Ms Reece was awarded the Children's Book Council of Australia's Nan Chauncy Award which honours individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the field of Australian children's literature. In 2015 Ms Reece was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her significant services to children through improving literacy skills and promoting Australian authors and illustrators.

Ms Reece will depart The Literature Centre on 11 June 2021.

Jackie French AM

"Everywhere we went, I saw the love that Lesley evoked, the awe, and especially the contagious commitment to help every Australian child, from those struggling those whose brilliance, if fostered carefully, might remould the world. Like decades of authors, I've joined those treks because every single session left lives changed, doors opened, not just with the love of books but the lifetime of potential that books contain.

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The heart of the Fremantle Literature Centre will always be Lesley Reece, and seen or not, her spirit will stay with us, with love and indomitable persistence, and possibly a glass of wine on one hand, and a new book in the other. I don't think any of us could bear it, if she were not."

Markus Zusak

*"There were many people who worked and contributed and did great things at The Literature Centre, but Lesley Reece **was** The Literature Centre (and probably always will be). She made every writer, illustrator, poet, artist and creator who walked through the door feel like family. She was the embodiment of integrity, and it made us better too. She'll be sorely missed by all us writers and illustrators. She valued our work. She championed it tirelessly. I can't thank her enough."*

Shaun Tan

*"I'm aware that the Centre largely exists through the concerted effort of Lesley against considerable ongoing odds, juggling creative, logistical and financial concerns in a sustainable way, through many ups and downs. She was and always will be a tireless advocate not only of children's visual and written literacy, but most importantly, of **really great** visual and written literacy for all young people. Not just celebrating cultural standards, but articulating what those are in a very practical and concrete way, through the teaching of both adults and children, connecting the dots, the words, the pictures, the people. It's hard to imagine Australian children's literature without Lesley's contribution, and it's also inspirational to see what difference an individual can make."*

Anthony Eaton

"For three decades now, Lesley's initiatives in the children's literature space have made an enormous difference to the field of children's literature, to literacy education more broadly, and to the careers of countless Australian writers and illustrators. Hers will be enormous shoes to fill, and her contributions to WA and to children's and young adult writing in Australia will be remembered for a long time."

For details and testimonials in full, visit The Literature Centre's website www.thelitcentre.org.au

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