

Top authors awarded for excellence in children's language and literacy development

Speech Pathology Australia will award four authors today for excellence in the development of children's speech, language and literacy skills.

Pamela Allen (*Is your Grandmother a Goanna?*), Nadia Wheatley and illustrator, Ken Searle (*Going Bush*), and Jenni Overend (*Stride's Summer*) will today receive one of Speech Pathology Australia's 2008 Book of the Year Awards.

"The alarming decline in literacy skills in Australia over the past decade highlights the importance of developing children's language and literacy from an early age," said Speech Pathology Australia's national public affairs coordinator, Natalie Ellston.

"As the peak professional body for speech pathologists, we are in a unique position to recommend books to parents that can assist children's speech, language and literacy development," she said.

Each year, Speech Pathology Australia selects three children's books based on their appeal to children, educational value, graphics and design, as well as their ability to facilitate communication, interaction and discussion.

"An engaging story encourages children to develop their imagination and curiosity, and to explore new ideas, which is vital for language and literacy," Ms Ellston said.

A panel of expert paediatric speech pathologists judge the Book of the Year Awards in three categories: Young Children, Lower Primary and Upper Primary.

The awards, which began in 2003, will be presented at the City of Burnside Library in Adelaide today, as part of Speech Pathology Week (24-30 August).

This year's guest speakers are Adelaide's Seven Nightly News presenter, Jane Doyle and Victoria Purman, Ministerial Adviser to the Hon. Jay Weatherill MP, Minister for Early Childhood Development.

Speech Pathology Week is held each year to celebrate the profession and its vital role in helping Australians with communication and swallowing difficulties.

For more information visit: www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

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Notes to Media:

- Speech Pathology Australia's national public affairs coordinator, Natalie Ellston, is available for interview.
- Book of the Year Awards will be at the City of Burnside Library (401 Greenhill Road, Tasmore) at 10.30am on 26 August.
- Images of book covers are available in jpeg format.

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Book of the Year 2008 winners:

Author	Book	Award
Pamela Allen	Is your Grandmother a Goanna? Entertaining and heart warming, Pamela Allen's <i>Is your Grandmother a Goanna?</i> is a fun, noisy, and surprising journey to visit Grandmother.	Young Children
Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle	Going Bush A story of harmony and friendship, this innovative collaboration between artist and writer documents 16 children (from eight schools in south-west Sydney) exploring their local environment.	Lower Primary
Jenni Overend	Strides Summer An evocative and beautifully observed coming-of-age narrative, capturing the world of Stride and his pet cockatoo, as he deals with the death of his father, love, fear and friendships, all on the cusp of adolescence.	Upper Primary

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About Speech Pathology Australia:

Speech Pathology Australia is the national peak body for more than 4,200 members. The Association supports and regulates the ethical, clinical and professional standards of its members. The Association also lobbies and advocates for people with communication and swallowing difficulties. For more information visit:

www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au