



## Friends of Storylines Incorporated

### Ngā Pou O Te Whare Waituhi Tamariki O Aotearoa

### Annual Report for 2025

## Introduction

Tēnā koutou katoa, nau mai, haere mai and a heartfelt welcome to the annual report of the Friends of Storylines Ngā Pou O Te Whare Waituhi Tamariki O Aotearoa.

I am enormously proud to stand before you at this year's 2025 AGM, representing the achievements of our tireless Management Committee who have collectively honoured our commitment to the kaupapa of our organisation; that is;

*'Inspiring young readers by supporting writers and illustrators.'*

This tenant is not just central to the work of Storylines, but it captures the extraordinary wealth of children's and young adult literature generated in Aotearoa New Zealand – home grown picture books, novels, poetry, works of nonfiction, works in te reo Māori and outstanding illustrative work to compliment every genre an all for our tamariki and rangatahi and borne of the world they live in, one that they recognise and respond to. I expect you are here tonight for the same reasons I am – our children, our stories, our place - our turangawaewae and the taonga we hold dear.

## Storylines Margaret Mahy Medal and Lecture Award

The Storylines year began on the 29<sup>th</sup> March with the annual Margaret Mahy lecture and the manuscript and Notable Book Awards. The Margaret Mahy Medal is presented annually to a person for their lifetime achievement and significant contribution to the field of children's and young adult literature and literacy. This year's recipient was revered poet Paula Green who engaged a full audience of friends, family and supporters with her lecture entitled *Kites and Anchors: a collage of writing poetry for and with children*. Paula's address was inspiring, provocative and a reminder of this very special genre. Why write poetry for children? Paula asked and suggested at once that, "poetry is the playground, the place to test things out, stretch, reach, and discover". Paula described taking her craft to the children themselves, sharing her own poems and those of the children she works with. "When you get children writing poetry, you offer them opportunities to recognise themselves, their whānau, their hopes and dreams". The audience was enormously appreciative that Paula had made an effort to be there on the day despite ill health, and for her outstanding lecture. It can be found on the Storylines website

at:<https://www.storylines.org.nz/wpcontent/uploads/2021/06/Storylines-Margaret-Mahy-Medal-Lecture-2025-Paula-Green.pdf>

## **Storylines Notable Book Awards**

The Storylines Notable Book Awards for 2025 took place after Paula Green's Margaret Mahy Lecture and once again celebrated excellence in children's and young adults' literature in Aotearoa New Zealand, showcasing outstanding titles across five categories:

Te Reo Māori, Picture books, Junior Fiction, YA (Young Adult) Fiction and Non-fiction.

Eight exceptional books were submitted in the Te Reo Māori category; reflecting te ao Māori through strength of narrative and dazzling illustration in both the korero and pūrākau sections. I pause here to personalise my own experience as a teacher working in the nascent bilingual Māori settings of the early 1980s when the only picture books in te reo Māori we had available were those we wrote and illustrated ourselves. We have come so far! Kua nui te kauneke o tēnei mahi. Kia ora Eva Mahara who so willingly and expertly convened this exciting and fast developing category.

In the 2025 Picture Book category there were 59 books submitted and Crissi Blair took on the demanding role of convenor. Books nominated in this category shine in our bookshops and libraries. We know anecdotally (research to follow) that these selections also feature prominently in the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults each year.

This was the case too for Junior Non-fiction, where publishers presented 27 books for convener Rosemary Tisdall and her judging team to read and judge. The Young Adult section made visible once again the strength of this category – 16 books reflecting, complementing and extending the ideas, identities and interests of our teens. This section was expertly convened by Anne Dickson.

Emma Smolden took on the convenorship of the Junior Fiction category where 26 books were submitted. This a significant tally given we understand this is a critical stage for children to become lifelong readers.

All up, the publishers, booksellers, librarians, teachers and readers must be pleased and incredibly proud of the depth and quality of the books available in each category. Thank you sincerely to our convenors and judging panels and congratulations to the writers, illustrators and translators of these wonderful books.

You can access all titles on <https://www.storylines.org.nz/awards/storylines-notable-book-awards/storylines-notable-book-lists-2025/> and at your local bookshops!

## **Storylines Manuscript Awards**

Our beloved patron, Joy Cowley, has described becoming a writer a bit like fishing. You must put out your writing bait and wait for the hook. The Storylines Manuscript Awards provide for just that possibility. They provide a place for aspiring writers and illustrators to try their hand and, if successful, the rewards are profound. It is through the variety of

opportunities in this award system that so many of our writers and illustrators have made their debut. As suggested above, you need only visit the bookstore or the library to see under every letter of the author alphabet how many of our manuscript winners and shortlisted writers are now well established and, in some cases, prolific. This gives enormous pleasure to the members of this organisation and likely the accomplishment of each winner is visceral for our judges, organisers and publishers. Herewith the parade of winners awarded at Margaret Mahy National Awards Day 2025:

**Storylines Janice Marriott Mentoring Award**: for an unpublished writer who has not published any junior or young adult fiction, sponsored by Janice Marriott *The Goose Bay Gang and the Secret Treasure*, Madeleine Roberts

**Storylines Te Kahurangi Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira Award** for a work originally written in te reo Māori, sponsored by with Huia Publishers *Te Taniwha Tōkenekene*, Brianne Te Paa

**Storylines Tom Fitzgibbon Award** for an original junior novel manuscript, sponsored by Scholastic NZ *The Keepers of the Broken Coast*, Shaun Barnett

**Storylines Gaelyn Gordon Award** for a much-loved book: *Kuwi's First Egg* Kat Merewether (Quin). First published Dec 2015

Please note, there was no award for the Storylines Joy Cowley Award in 2025.

Thank you to Kanapu Rangitauira, Tessa Duder, Zac McCullum, Libby Limbrick for their convenorship of the manuscript awards and for the highly professional work of the judging panels. All up there were 227 entries, received and delivered to the team in each category and then prepared for judging and certification by Vicki Cunningham (Operations Manager)

### **Storylines Betty Gilderdale Award:**

Bob Docherty, a longtime supporter and blogger of best books for children and young adults received his award at a warm and well-attended function at Aranui Library in Christchurch on Sunday the 16th of November. Bob worked tirelessly over a long career in libraries to promote children's books, most notably through his influential blog *Bob's Books*, where he has single-handedly reviewed many hundreds of mainly Aotearoa New Zealand publications. In lieu of Storylines members being available in Christchurch on the day, Kate DeGoldi, Te Awhi Rito, acted as our MC and was assisted by Julie Kleinpaste, a secondary English teacher, and helped out by Sue Bridges, Rachael King, Heather McQuillan, our patron Gavin Bishop and other Waipounamu literati. Bob's friend and nominator, Nagelkerke introduced Bob and outlined a vitally interesting and committed life of books and travels before Bob himself rose to the podium and delivered a well-received and amusing lecture. Thank you to our supporters who ensured the day was such a success even without Management Committee presence.

## Storylines Story Tours

Storylines once again took to the road in 2025, undertaking five tours, fewer than the previous year, but this time with a commitment to published authors and illustrators fluent and in te reo Māori and familiar with tikanga and Mātauranga Māori. This has been a highly successful move and created a commitment we intend to keep.

A total of 16,504 students or individuals were reached in 163 mainstream classrooms, kura, early childhood centres, libraries or in the community. The AUT LitPlus research conducted for Storylines in 2024 suggested this 'reach' has a positive effect on student and teacher interest and motivation, important factors in helping to create readers and writers for the future. The data collected has helped inform Story Tour planning for 2025 and provides valued information for funding applications. The report is titled *Inspiring the Magic of Reading & Writing: A Storylines Story Tour impact report*; Emery, Jensen, Bernay and Milne (March 2025).

Minibus transport, conveying our writers and illustrators around the motu, has totted up 5886 kilometres so far - a mind boggling distance, equivalent to travelling from New Plymouth to Auckland and then to Perth!

For the 2025 year we covered the following regions; Tairāwhiti, 19 – 23 May 2025. Tāmaki Makaurau, 9-13 June 2025, Te Tai Tokerau, 18-22 August 2025, Waikato Region, 1-5 September 2025, Te Tau Ihu o te Waka a Māui, 3-7 November 2025.

The Story Tours are the most significant, and most expensive, focus of the organisation and in the face of straightened times concessions have had to be made. The Management Committee and the Trust are working hard to ensure the tours are continued and the impact of the venture maintained.

Thank you to Vicki Cunningham (Operations Manager) for her exceptional ability to organise the Story Tours. Each tour is extraordinarily logistically and strategically complex and Vicki manages this with professional calm and great dignity.

### **Upcoming: Storylines National Hui, Auckland, 3-4 October 2026:**

Planning is underway and the venue, budget and timeline are all well in place. Keynote speakers and workshop presenters have been selected and have accepted. Publishers have been willing to sponsor affiliated writers, and pleasing progress to meet the breakeven date on July 5th has been made. So far 82 people have enrolled to attend via the 'Early Bird' option but there are still more places available. We would like to encourage members, or others you know who are, or aspire to be, writers and illustrators to consider the value of this two-day event tailored to provide first class workshops, keynote lectures and pitch slams. The event is catered and includes the now famous literary banquet on the Saturday evening. This is a significant fundraising opportunity for Storylines and while the

event directly benefits one half of our kaupapa, the writers and illustrators, it also has enormous potential for the organisation to continue the Story Tours for our tamariki, and to fund other initiatives to ensure an ongoing operation in a highly contested funding environment.

## **Other business:**

- **Membership:**

While last year's numbers took a dip in November 2025 to 245, membership to date is showing an upward trend numbering 299 at present but this tally is currently enhanced by people seeking membership to qualify for the Early Bird price at the Hui. One challenge will be to encourage these new members to maintain their affiliation by widening benefits. The membership subcommittee is to meet urgently to refresh and advance a wide range of ideas put forward last year, and a survey of current membership is proposed to determine what members would expect of the organisation and how we might deliver this within the fiscal, physical and time constraints we have as volunteers within a charitable organisation. Raising membership is arguably to be our most important undertaking in the new financial year. Thank you Amy Luxton Esler for her sterling work as membership secretary.

- **Fundraising:**

Looking forward into the new financial year, membership and fundraising will be inextricably linked. The suggestions arising from membership decreases in 2025 (above) relate closely to the organisation's ability to raise money in the year to come. We are delighted to have Renee Tanner on the team now as Executive Officer as she has significant professional expertise in this field. At present she is working closely with Tessa Duder and Alison Shucksmith to bring an auction to fruition via Trade Me. This is likely to provide a considerable boost to our finances as it involves an original (and brand-new) framed painting of Hairy Maclary and friends. We have been informed the painting has real provenance in the world of art, but for any follower of Aotearoa New Zealand children's literature it is priceless. The date for auction will be advertised soon on our social media sites.

While 2025 was very challenging for all charitable organisations, we remain hardworking and hopeful that our funding applications and fundraising measures will improve our financial position.

Your support as members counts. Please do encourage friends, whanau and colleagues to join us on our important mission to strengthen and enhance the literate lives of writers, illustrators and readers in this country be it through membership, the Hui event coming up, by donation, or even by endowment.

- **Incorporated Society and Charities Commission Compliance:**

Begun in the 2025 year, a small team has worked to secure accreditation under new legislation before 5th April 2026. This was achieved in timely fashion, and the organisation has been certificated. This now raises opportunity to consider a proposal from the Trust for a change in structure that might enhance both governance and operational processes. This is currently a work in progress, and the membership will be advised of a special general meeting to advise and discuss any changes in due course.

- **The Storylines Team:**

Finally, the mahi reported above would not be possible without the tireless efforts of Vicki Cunningham (Operations Manager) and previous Executive Officer, Anne De Lautour. Anne farewelled Storylines in December 2025 after completing the financial year. These very special people are the glue that keeps the organisation functioning smoothly and professionally. Without them there would be no Storylines as we know it. Thank you sincerely to each one, and best wishes Anne as you settle into a post Storylines world. It is important too to acknowledge, support and thank the Storylines Trust Board in their vision for children's and young adult literature in Aotearoa New Zealand as we plumb the deep pool of talent and activity through our collective effort. Thank you to the membership for believing in what we do, and for upholding a kaupapa that actively promotes and inspires young people, in all their diversity, to become readers, writers, illustrators and critically aware thinkers and 'doers' in an increasingly complex world.

And lastly, I am honoured to be able to say thank you from my heart to each member of the wonderful 2025 Management Committee team who have supported, challenged and inspired me as I have bumbled through my first year as chairperson.

The Committee for 2025 comprised: Helen Villers, Chairperson, Alison Shucksmith, Deputy Chairperson, Libby Limbrick, Acting Treasurer, Alana Hawkes, Minute Secretary, Amy Luxton Esler, Membership Secretary, Tessa Duder, Anne Kayes, Leonie Agnew and Weng Wai Bing.

**Ngā mihi nui ki a koe mo tō tautoko**

**Thank you for your support**

*Helen Villers, Chairperson*

Friends of Storylines Incorporated Ngā Pou o Te Whare Waituhi Tamariki o Aotearoa  
April 2026.