

N2027.594405  
2

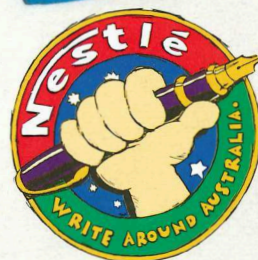
# UPFRONT



Journal of the friends and supporters of the State Library of New South Wales



## Let your imagination fly!





# Let your imagination fly! Write on!

BY MICHAEL MANGOLD

FROM ITS SMALL beginnings at Liverpool City Library in 1993, when 349 young people participated, the *Nestlé Write Around Australia* program has grown to involve approximately 35,000 young people in five states in 1995. In 1996 it will expand to be a truly national program when South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory also participate.

Part of the charter of the State Library's Education Service is to create opportunities for children to enhance the learning and pleasure they gain from both reading and writing. Past programs for young people have included school holiday activities and co-ordination of two Australia Council funded *Writer-in-Community* programs in public libraries. These programs have placed published authors and young people in creative

These are the opening paragraphs of *A Chapter From My Childhood*, a story by Naomi which was published in the *Nestlé Write Around Australia 1994 Finalists' Collection*:

*As I sat talking to my niece, I recalled the time when my parents told me we would have to move to the city, just like her parents had told her.*

*It was the end of a cold Goulburn winter, and I was walking home with my best friend Kate, to study. Kate had been my best friend since the first day of kindergarten. Our friendship had lasted through bad times before, but nothing like what was about to happen later that day.*

*When we got home, we turned on the radio and opened our books. My Mum came into the room...*

"The competition component of *Nestlé Write Around Australia* will start each year in March and finish around the second week of May. The creative workshops with authors for school groups at local public libraries will follow in July.

"By making it a regular scheduled event each year we are giving teachers time to plan. Our hope is that teachers will use the program to complement the creative writing occurring in schools and demonstrate its importance in the wider community too.

"The format is simple, a competition for a 500 word story on any topic the individual child cares to write about, followed by creative writing workshops with Australian children's authors. What we are looking for are original ideas and creativity, not the rehashing of last night's soapie or the written account of a video game. We want their imaginations to fly!"

Sponsorship by Nestlé Australia Ltd has enabled the project to have a fulltime *Nestlé Write Around Australia* Coordinator, a Project Officer and Clerical Assistant. The State Library of New South Wales provides



writing workshops. It is from this experience that *Nestlé Write Around Australia* has emerged to link the State Library of New South Wales, state libraries throughout Australia, public libraries, schools, authors, the sponsor, children's book publishers, and young writers into what is a national multi-faceted program.

The Australian children's books awarded as prizes in the competition facet of *Nestlé Write Around Australia* are valued at over \$80,000. The Australian book publishing industry is becoming aware of the impact and opportunities *Nestlé Write Around Australia* holds for them and children's authors in terms of exposure and book sales.

Naomi Leigh Adams from Year Six at Narellan Public School was a finalist in *Nestlé Write Around Australia* last year and has entered again this year. She says, "A lot of children are good at writing but they never get a chance to prove it."



"One of the best things about *Nestlé Write Around Australia* is being able to write a story and have other people's opinions on it, from students your own age as well as the judges," Naomi said.

"My story last year was about a girl who had a fight with her mother about moving home. It was something that had happened to me. My entry this year is a redo of a story I wrote in Year 5 but it's a lot stronger and a lot deeper because of the things I have been reading this year. Everybody who has read it says it is good. Gruesome but good!"

"*Nestlé Write Around Australia* is quickly gaining national recognition and becoming a major event in school calendars," Wilma Norris, Acting Manager of the State Library's Education Service, said.



continuous support and liaison for the public libraries involved in the program. In the lead up to this year's program over 7,000 information packages were assembled by State Library Volunteers for a huge mail out to schools and public libraries across the states involved. The response has been phenomenal.

"We received more than 20,000 entries. This included a 33% increase in the number of entries from New South Wales and 7,833 entries from Victoria in the first year of operation there", Val Noake, National Coordinator said. "Around 200 people will be involved in the judging process."

"We knew the potential was there," Wilma Norris said. "Nestlé Sponsorship has



enabled us to take it national. The competition and the opportunity for children to participate in creative writing workshops with the published children's authors whose books they read, is only possible because of sponsorship."

Carla Tockar was in Year 5 last year at Moriah College, Bondi Junction, when she wrote *What A Day* one of the stories published in the *1994 Finalists' Collection*. She has vivid memories of the workshop she participated in with children's author Diana Kidd (*The Day Grandma Came To Stay*, *Onion Tears*, *The Fat And Juicy Place*, *Spider and the King*)

"I was excited to meet Diana, I couldn't believe it," Carla said. "She gave me lots of good hints and tips. This program makes me feel that I can actually write good stories."

*I just hate my life. Here I am, stuck in a dunny with my enemy, the caterpillar. I suppose you're wondering how I got here. Well, I'll explain.*



*It started off as a fine sunny day. The flowers were blooming, the children were out playing and the birds were chirping. I was just minding my own business and enjoying the sunshine, when unexpectedly a strong gust of wind swept through the air out of nowhere. I floated to the ground gently.*

The rest of Carla Tockar's *What A Day* does indeed 'explain'. It also confirms her ability to write imaginatively and shows the benefits of *Nestlé Write Around Australia*.

Peter Kelly, General Manager Corporate Services, Nestlé Australia says *Nestlé Write Around Australia* is a key part of the Company's public relations program.

"The commercial reality is that more and more members of the community want to buy products from companies that are ethical and do something for the community," Peter Kelly said.

Nestlé brands such as Nescafé and Milo are associated with sponsorship programs for young men and women to develop their potential in business and sports such as netball and cricket. But with *Nestlé Write Around Australia* the aim was to be involved in a corporate sponsorship program linked with a fundamental community issue.

"If you look at the leisure time activities of Australians, libraries are the most visited recreational outlet by far," Peter Kelly said. "Running alongside this you have a general concern about literacy in the community."

"*Nestlé Write Around Australia* brings these two factors together in a fun way. When a workshop is conducted at a local library, half a day is dedicated to the zone finalists of the competition but on the other four days the authors are available to everyone.

"The feedback that we have is that the program fits perfectly with the English curriculum and has the support of the teaching profession."

At last year's presentation held at the State Library of New South Wales the spirit and atmosphere amongst the finalists and the



two ultimate winners of the 1994 *Nestlé Write Around Australia* competition confirmed Nestlé's long term commitment to the program.

"The camaraderie between these 10 to 12 year olds was remarkable," Peter Kelly said. "At the end of the presentation each of these writers had the book with their story in it. They had their Nestlé backpack, their \$500 worth of Australian children's books (the school of each finalist also received \$500 worth of books). But the most amazing thing of all was the sight of these children running around getting each others' autographs."

"It was a really great day, to see proud kids, proud parents, proud grandparents. It was fantastic! The people in the Education Service at the State Library have all worked extremely hard. We are also delighted with the obvious support of the State Librarian, Dagmar Schmidmaier."

Dagmar has in fact likened the appeal *Nestlé Write Around Australia* has for children today to the camaraderie of the ABC's *Argonauts* in the 1950s when radio serials were such an active agent in stimulating imaginative thinking and writing amongst children. She says the potential of the program to use the information superhighway and in particular the Internet to allow these young writers to communicate with each other is a very exciting prospect and one that the State Library would like to explore next year.



*Pictured: Nestlé Write Around Australia workshops at Liverpool and Mosman Libraries, featuring Catherine Jinks (centre opposite page) and Ursula Dubosarsky (centre this page).*



**For further information about the Nestlé Write Around Australia Program contact National Coordinator Val Noake on Phone: (02) 230 1610 or Fax (02) 223 8709**