

Ms Elizabeth Gleeson AM

B.A (Hons) Dip Ed Cert TESOL Sydney – A freelance professional writer since 1987, Libby has made considerable contributions in the field children’s literature and has published more than thirty titles for children and young people. She is an award-winning writer and an educator who constantly uses her expertise as a writer to advocate for quality education, equity and social justice. Libby has an ongoing commitment to the transformative impact of the Arts in education.

Honorary Doctor of Letters

Conferring ceremony: 11.30am, 31 October 2014 (Combined ceremony: Education and Social Work with Science).

Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Elizabeth Gleeson AM to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).

Libby Gleeson graduated from the University of Sydney in 1974 with an honours degree in History and a Diploma of Education. She has taught in secondary schools, universities and tertiary colleges in Australia, Italy and London.

In 1984 her first book: *Eleanor, Elizabeth*, won the Angus and Robertson New Writers for the Young Fellowship and was Highly Commended in the Australian Children’s Book Council Book of the Year Awards. Since 1987 Libby Gleeson has been a freelance writer of fiction for young people and has published more than forty titles for children and young people. She has been shortlisted or has won every major literary award available to this kind of writing in the country and she is widely published overseas. Her junior novel: *Hannah Plus One* won the Book of the Year in 1997, *An Ordinary Day*, illustrated by Armin Greder, won Picture Book of the Year in 2002 and *Amy and Louis*, illustrated by Freya Blackwood, won the Early Childhood Book of the Year in 2007. In 2000, *The Great Bear*, illustrated by Armin Greder, won the Bologna Ragazzi, the most prestigious award in the world for a children’s picture book. This is the only time this award has been won by an Australian title. Alongside her own writing, Libby Gleeson has presented frequently at conferences and festivals and undertaken creative writing workshops for children and teachers across the country. In addition she has published a number of non-fiction books on writing.

Libby Gleeson has played important leadership role in the creative writing industry. From 1999 to 2001 she was chair of the Australian Society of Authors and now serves on the Council of the ASA. She has been the Chair of the NSW Government, Ministry for the Arts, Literature and History Committee. In 2004 Libby was the May Gibbs Fellow, University of Canberra and a Member, NSW Department of Education panel to make awards for Excellence in Teaching. She is Chair of the Advisory Board for *West Words*, the Children’s and Youth Literature Centre in Western Sydney. In 2005 Libby received the NSW Minister for Education Medal for Meritorious Service to Public Education. She has been a member of the NSW Public Education Foundation since 2007 and has played important roles in other professional organisations including the Copyright Agency and the Children’s Book Council.

As well as her many literary awards, Libby Gleeson’s leadership and service roles have been recognised. In 1997 she received the Lady Cutler Award for services to children’s literature and in 2007 the Medal in the Order of Australia (AM) for her ‘services to literature and literacy learning’. She was the recipient of the Dromkeen Medal for her ‘significant contribution to the appreciation and development of children’s literature in Australia’.

Libby Gleeson is an Honorary Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney and frequently provides lectures and workshops for its pre-service teachers and alumni. She also teaches Creative Writing courses for the University of Sydney’s Continuing Education.

Libby Gleeson’s works frequently address important social justice and social inclusion themes. For example, *Refuge* (1998) and *Mahtab’s Story* (2008) both explore refugee issues; *The Great Bear* examines freedom. Her picture book, *Clancy and Millie* and the *Very Fine House*, illustrated by Freya Blackwood was published by Little Hare in 2009 and in 2010 was an Honour Book in the Early Childhood Awards for the Children’s Book Council of Australia. In 2011 two picture books were published: *I am Thomas* illustrated by Armin Greder, a work for adolescents; and *Look, A Book*, illustrated by Freya Blackwood, a picture book for young children.

Her most recent novel, *Red*, was a winner at the Prime Minister's Literary Awards 2013 in the category of Children's Fiction and her recent picture book with Freya Blackwood Banjo and *Ruby Red* has been awarded an honour Book in by the Children's Book Council for 2014 *Early Childhood Picture Book*. Another title with the illustrator Freya Blackwood: *Go to Sleep Jessie* was published this week.

Libby Gleeson was the Faculty of Education and Social Work's inaugural Artist-in-Residence in 2011. Her collaborative approach to the inaugural program meant that the sessions were devised to meet the needs of the Faculty's and University's stakeholders as well as showing commitment to the local community. Libby Gleeson's inaugural Artist-in-Residence program with the Faculty of Education & Social Work had a direct impact on approximately 800 of our stakeholders. The program raised the profile of the Faculty amongst its stakeholder groups and firmly established its ongoing commitment to the transformative impact of the Arts in education.

Libby Gleeson is an award-winning writer and leader in the field of children's literature, an educator who constantly uses her expertise as a writer to advocate for quality education, equity and social justice.

Chancellor, I present Elizabeth Gleeson for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.