

Picture book wins coveted national award

December 05, 2020

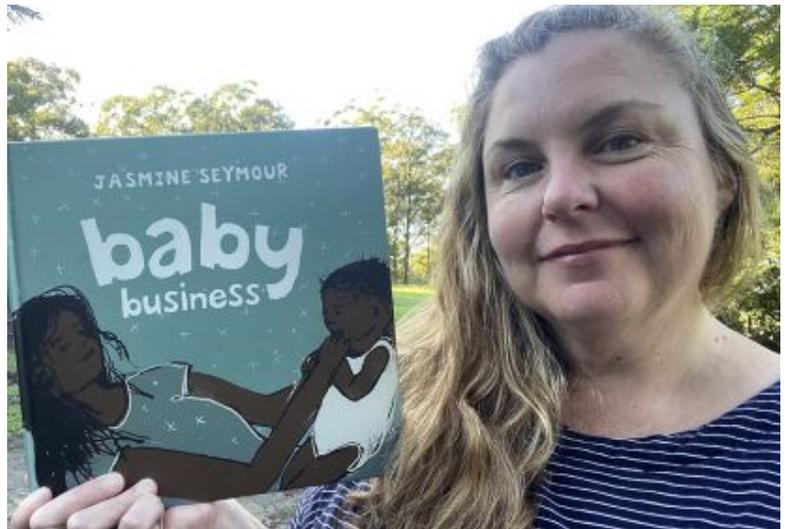
Federation member Jasmine Seymour can now add award-winning illustrator to her list of achievements, after being crowned Best New Illustrator by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

Her book *Baby Business* tells the story of a smoking ceremony performed to welcome a baby to Country and uses traditional Darug words alongside evocative illustrations.

The judges of the award were struck by how Jasmine depicted smoke in her illustrations, as well as her use of line, texture and colour to represent culture.

Jasmine, a Darug woman and descendent of Maria Lock, was inspired to create the book after speaking with friends who were becoming grandmothers.

"With new babies on the way our talk turned to smoking ceremonies and their importance in our culture." Jasmine said. "I also wanted to help Aboriginal children connect to their culture and to understand that our traditions continue to this day — they aren't something from the past — they are alive now."



Jasmine began *Baby Business* with a series of illustrations and the story grew from them.

She has been drawing and illustrating since she was a child, a passion she shared with her father.

"I used to draw with my dad constantly when I was a child and have always been inspired by being on Country," she said.

Her favourite image in the book is of the family walking to the smoking place.

"This picture transports me to that time when I was little and walking on Country with Nanna." she said.

"I can hear the trees, birds, wind, and insects... even feel the sun on my back and the crunch of the grass."

Jasmine teaches at Riverstone Public School and the whole school supported her in her ambition: "They were so supportive and really came along with me on the journey. They're really proud of the book."

Alongside teaching, Jasmine is studying for a master's degree in Indigenous languages and hopes that a Darug language program will be introduced into schools in the future.

This is just the beginning for Jasmine, she plans on continuing to write and illustrate books about Aboriginal culture and customs. "Aboriginal people do not have one experience, it's unique and varied. We need a

diversity of art and books to tell our stories.”

She also hopes to inspire young Aboriginal people to pursue illustration and writing, to tell their stories in their own way. “Just go for it. We’re natural storytellers, so don’t be scared.”

Baby Business is published by Magabala Books. Their website has downloadable teacher resources to accompany the book at bit.ly/magbooks.