

Good Morning Teachers, students, guests and most importantly the incredibly talented authors who have written some of our favourite books.

My name is Amani Kowaidar, I am currently in Year 7 at Birrong Girls High School. If you had asked me 2 weeks ago I wouldn't have described myself as a reader, I have books on my bookshelf that I have never touched just gathering dust.

My Librarian, Mr Davidson tried on many occasions to engage me in reading but he could have given me every book in the Library and I still would not have been interested. Usually I would read about twelve pages and get bored or sometimes even just the blurb, full stop! It just seemed like nothing could grab my attention or change my mind about reading.

Then amazingly, one lunchtime Mr Davidson showed me a book by this year's KOALA Legend. The book is called "Sequin Star." I was hooked! I read one page of Sequin Star and I was caught up in the magic that is books. I wouldn't go to bed, I would leave my lamp on and read, read, read. Although my eyes were heavy and wanting to rest, I was strong and pushed on until finally falling asleep with the book open on my chest.

The author of this amazingly inspiring book is with us today in the audience. I would like to thank her for making me so happy! My Mum can finally see a book in my hands which also makes her happy. If it weren't for this wonderful book I would probably still be searching. I can't wait to read more of your remarkable books.

I am proud to say that we have the honour of presenting the 2018 KOALA Legend Award. This year the award goes to Belinda Murrell! Congratulations from me, us and everyone.

Good morning Teachers, students, distinguished guests and inspirational authors. My name is Arielle Taulapapa and I would like to speak about our chosen Koala Legend Award winner for 2018, Belinda Murrell. Belinda was born into a big, old house on the North Shore of Sydney. In this house she was surrounded by books, animals and the bush. In this environment Belinda became an avid reader. At night it would be Belinda, a torch and a book against the ominous night sky. Books became Belinda's inspiration, dragging her sister and herself into the magical abyss of ready-made characters.

If you were to ask what her childhood favourites were you might be stuck with her for hours. There are so many wonderful books in her memory. I decided to focus on the Narnia series, Nancy Drew, and The Hobbit. These are novels that carved a yellow brick road for the future author. For Belinda, fantasy books were her favourites, where she could explore new, mythical worlds with characters of many faces. These characters soon became close friends with Belinda and together they could take over the world side by side.

She began writing in hand illustrated exercise books at the age of 8! When she grew up she combined her love of writing with her love of travel and worked as a travel journalist, a technical writer and a public relations consultant. She now lives in Manly in a gorgeous house overlooking the sea with her husband Rob and three beautiful children who inspire her writing! She continues to travel all over Australia and talk books.

Good morning Teachers, students, special guests and authors. My name is Natania Sim, and I will be speaking to you about our 2018 KOALA Legend Award winner Belinda Murrell's publications. She has published so many books I can't mention them all so I will talk about the series they are part of.

The Sun Sword Trilogy which is about a quest to save a kingdom came first.

Her most famous books are from her Time Slip series, written over the course of many years. All of the Time Slip series have the names of jewellery pieces as their title. Belinda has been awarded many times for these books. This year The Forgotten Pearl is on the KOALA Short List for Older Readers and as you heard Amani is reading The Sequin Star.

She now has two series for younger readers. The first is about Lulu Bell who is growing up in a Vet Hospital and the second is Pippa's Island which a family adventure set on the seaside.

So now please welcome the 2018 KOALA legend, Belinda Murrell!