

PRESS RELEASE AUGUST 2023

Dirrarn

By Carl Merrison and Hakea Hustler

Magabala Books celebrates the release of *Dirrarn*, the award-winning sequel to bestseller *Black Cockatoo*



Dirrarn is the winner of the 2021 Daisy Utemorrah Award and the highly anticipated sequel to the junior fiction bestseller *Black Cockatoo*, by Jaru man Carl Merrison and Hakea Hustler, out 1 August by Magabala Books.

Dirrarn continues Mia's story, picking up a few months after where *Black Cockatoo* left off. She has had to leave her country and head to boarding school in the big city. As Mia wrestles with all that is unfamiliar, she must learn to stand in her truth when confronted with unending challenges.

'It felt like a big responsibility,' says Carl and Hakea when asked about how it felt to return to Mia's story. '[*Black Cockatoo*] has been studied all over Australia and even internationally so there was some pressure to make sure we did her next adventure justice.'

Black Cockatoo has become a title especially important for reluctant readers, with many teachers sharing stories of students who had never read a full book before, who had finished Mia's story.

'We hope that readers will have a similar connection and reaction to the next stage in Mia's story,' says Hakea. 'We purposefully wrote it short and accessible with low literacy readers in mind – we wanted to make sure they had a quality book with depth but that they could read.'

The dirrarn (black cockatoo) is Mia's totem animal. It provides her with the strength and freedom to stay connected to her world, even when she is a long way from home. A situation that many regional First Nations students find themselves in.

'It's important to tell stories like Mia's – a remote First Nations girl – to show First Nations children that their stories are 'worth' being written and read,' says Carl.

Rachel Bin Salleh, Magabala's Publisher, agrees: 'Stories like Mia's are important because our children can see themselves and their experiences in text. *Dirrarn* invites readers to peek into the chasm of culture, class and spirituality that First Nations children experience daily. This extraordinary story about power of place, quiet connection, and the honouring of truths, gifts all our children the possibilities of choices and a different future.'

Dedicated teacher notes will be available for *Dirrarn* on the Magabala website.

Available August in all good bookshops and online from Magabala Books — RRP \$17.99

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The Authors

Carl Merrison is a Jaru man from Halls Creek. Carl works with young Indigenous boys through the Clontarf Academy focusing on improving engagement with education and providing a positive role model. Carl was nominated for Australian of the Year (2016).

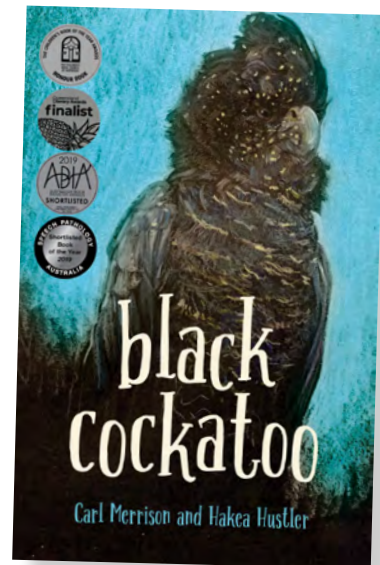


Hakea Hustler was a high school English teacher at Halls Creek District High School. Hakea is committed to First Nations education with a particular focus on school engagement, English language and story as learning, understanding and empowerment.

Black Cockatoo

by Carl Merrison and Hakea Hustler

- **HONOUR BOOK, 2019 CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS, YOUNGER READERS**
- **FINALIST, 2019 READINGS CHILDREN'S BOOK PRIZE**
- **SHORTLISTED, 2019 AUSTRALIAN BOOK INDUSTRY AWARDS, SMALL PUBLISHERS' CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE YEAR**
- **SHORTLISTED, 2019 QUEENSLAND LITERARY AWARDS, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD**
- **SHORTLISTED, 2019 SPEECH PATHOLOGY AUSTRALIA BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS, EIGHT TO 10 YEARS**



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