

Anna Walker - Acceptance speech

"Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Girls and Boys. In February 2013 I drew a picture of myself worrying, a girl with a scratchy, scribbly cloud looming over her. It is with unexpected joy that I stand before you today as a result of that worried scribble which became Mr Huff!

Thank you to the Children's Book Council of Australia for recognising this quiet book, and congratulations to all the authors and illustrators on the Early Childhood list for their wonderful work.

Early in the development of this story I received support from the Australia Council for the Arts Picture Book Initiative, managed by the Australian Society of Authors, for which I will be forever grateful.

A huge thank you to Jane Godwin my brave publisher who is not only a dear friend but an inspiration. Thank you to Bruno Herfst, the fabulous designer at Penguin who worked on Mr Huff, and thought he was, 'a cool dude!'. Thank you to Laura Harris for looking after both Mr Huff and I with such care and the whole team at Penguin for their support.

Thank you to my husband Scott, for his unwavering love and support, my lovely children Olive, Joseph and Sam and my mum, dad and brother. They are my own personal cheer squad!

Growing up I spent many hours happily looking through picture books in the library. Thank you to all the librarians, book sellers, teachers CBCA volunteers, families, and most importantly children who love books - they are the gatekeepers to the world of imagination.

I also want to thank two people who have been a never ending source of encouragement since 1992 and work tirelessly to celebrate Australian Children's literature. Ann James and Ann Haddon, you are amazing, thank you.

It takes a community to create a picture book. I feel proud and honoured to be part of that community and to be here with you all. I can't help imagining Mr Huff reluctantly standing beside me now in his huge nebulous form and in his deep grumbly voice sighing, pausing. . . and quietly saying 'thank you'."