

WHO ARE YOU AS AN ARTIST AND WHAT INFLUENCES YOU?

I'm a children's author, and I am most passionate about writing stories about community, belonging, and everyday life in regional Australia. Growing up in Gympie and nearby areas (Pie Creek, Widgee, then Kingaroy), I was surrounded by ordinary moments that felt extraordinary—family trips into Mary Street, wandering the old Angus & Robertson and The Turning Page bookshops, morning tea with my gran at The Brown Jug Cafe, and all these great memories and experiences of living and growing up in Gympie definitely shaped my writing and the important influence that regional towns have upon my books. My grandmothers especially, Betty Cullen and Evelyn 'Peg' Whittle, were especially influential; they took me to Gympie Library, bought me books, told me stories, and always encouraged me. I love putting little pieces into my books that pay tribute to my grandmothers, and, in turn, Gympie, since my memories are of spending time there with them.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ART?

I write contemporary middle-grade fiction for young readers and adult fiction grounded in real experiences. I love writing stories that explore friendship, intergenerational connection, resilience, fairness, and empathy, often blending humour with heartfelt moments. Setting my stories in small country towns or regional/rural areas is important to me, because it's where I grew up, but also because working class families or families and kids living outside of cities are rare to see in books. I want to make sure kids who grow up in country areas like I did know that their stories matter and can see their own lives reflect, while also imagining new possibilities. My stories are both a mirror to recognise their own lives and a window into other people's worlds.

WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO?

Writing lets me connect with readers and make sense of the world. Kids are thoughtful and perceptive, and books can spark conversations about big ideas. I want them to feel seen, understood, and to realise that small acts, whether they be kindness, courage, or helping their community, can make a real difference. I started writing as a six year old, and sent books to publishers when I was 9, so it's really a total part of me - I do it because there's nothing else I am made to do!

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING AN ARTIST IN GYMPIE?

Being from a regional town has shaped how I create. Gympie taught me that meaningful stories exist everywhere and that strong communities are built in small, everyday moments. It's a town full of character, warmth, and community spirit, and that sense of belonging is at the heart of everything I do. I also love the rich history of Gympie's past. In fact, the next novel I am writing is a historical book set during the Gympie Gold Rush.



BLURB OF THE PRIME MINISTER PROBLEM:

When a lonely boy's mission to save his grandmother goes viral, it sparks a movement that reshapes his country town — and everyone in it. Ten-year-old Wren has always felt invisible. Mum is busy working two jobs, his brother has his own life, and at school, Wren hides in the library with the books his grandmother taught him to love. Grandma is the only person who truly sees him — until she has a stroke and is forced to move away to a nursing home in the city. Lonelier than ever, Wren writes to the Prime Minister for help. When no reply comes, his small act of hope takes on a life of its own — and Wren discovers he isn't the only one who feels forgotten. As his town rallies around him, Wren learns that real solutions don't come from politicians, but from the people who call the town home.

The Prime Minister Problem by Brenton Cullen is published by Riveted Press and available to buy at all good bookshops, online retailers, or request it at your local library. Follow Brenton's work at www.brentoncullen.com or @brenton_cullen on Instagram