

MEDIA RELEASE 13 July 2010

A highlight of this year's Ex Libris Book Fair is The Big Port Fairy Book Club. It will have a similar format to Jennifer Byrne's First Tuesday Book Club on ABC-TV, but with more audience participation.

The Book Club will be chaired by Robert Gott, one of the popular guests at last year's Ex Libris Fair. Robert, a journalist and novelist, is probably best known as the creator of the Naked Man cartoons published in *The Age* each Friday.

The books chosen for discussion are *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

Ex Libris chairperson, Mary Delaney, said today she hoped local residents, visitors and book clubs would re-read the Harper Lee classic and plunge into the recently-published *Jasper Jones*.

Jasper Jones is the second novel by Australian author Craig Silvey. It has won several literary prizes in the past year. It was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award and won the Indie Award.

The main character, Charlie Bucktin, a bookish 13-year-old, climbs out his bedroom window at night when summoned by town outcast, Jasper Jones. Charlie is embarking on more than a moonlight ramble. The frightful scene that confronts the two boys plunges them into a nightmare that will end only when they see justice done.

The novel is set in a small West Australian town during the summer of 1965. It transports us back to the time of Doug Walters' maiden century, the Vietnam War and young boys batting and bowling for hours with milk crate 'stumps' in the middle of the road.

Comparisons with Mark Twain and Harper Lee cannot be avoided, in part because the young Charlie Bucktin reads these two avidly, and his sense of justice comes directly from the moral rectitude of Atticus Finch.

The book is not without its flaws and some critics have found the adolescent humour and endless banter between Charlie and his best friend Jeffrey Lu a little tedious. But there is no doubt that readers will be engrossed in the action from beginning to end.

Sit down, fasten your seat belt and enjoy the ride. *Jasper Jones* will have you reading well into the night and if you hear a voice calling outside your bedroom window, don't reply!

The Big Port Fairy Book Club convenes on Saturday 4th September at the Port Fairy Yacht Club and will be preceded by drinks and canapes.