

Gang-O Kids:

A fun book for a new generation of O-Kids!



Article by Darren Sandford

It's been quite some time since there's been a fiction book based around Orienteering, particularly a children's junior novel. However, that's now changed. A new title, *"Gang-O Kids"*, by Australian author Hazel Edwards has just been released.

Gang-O Kids is an easy-to-read children's chapter book. The book is designed for readers aged from about 7 to 11 and especially those interested in sport. There are four individual chapters featuring the adventures of a gang of five kids. Jamie-the-Brainy, "Mars Bar" Mario, Kate and twins Tina and Emma are all members of the "Bunyip Orienteering Club". They get together on the weekends at Orienteering events and find themselves in situations where their mystery solving skills are put to the test.

Disclosure: as publisher of *"Gang-O Kids"*, I have a vested interest in seeing the book sell, but I also am keen to help promote Orienteering to a new generation of kids. As such, I wanted to share with the readers of *The Australian Orienteer* how this book came about and how I hope to ensure that many primary school and local libraries have a copy available for interested kids or even literacy sets for reading groups.

In mid-2007, after taking over Orienteering Service of Australia, I was scouring the internet for new titles related to Orienteering. While we stock a great range of various instructional type books and manuals, on the whole, I was a bit disappointed that there weren't too many titles published recently. On doing a search, I hit upon Hazel Edward's website which advised that publishing rights to *"O Gang"* and *"O Gang Again"* were available. I did a bit more research and learned that these were popular children's chapter books published in the mid-80's. Curious to learn more, I emailed Hazel. After finding out that Hazel lived in Melbourne, we had chat over afternoon tea one Sunday and both agreed that if she modernised the manuscript, Orienteering Service of Australia would publish a new edition with new illustrations. The rewrite date was to be by the end of January 2008.

Christmas 2007 soon came and went, but we remained in contact. Hazel tackled the rewrite as promised, but then came down with an illness which required hospitalisation. I had been pretty relaxed about the timeframes on the project, until a recovered Hazel advised that we had an opportunity to launch the book at Children's Literature in the Centre conference in Alice Springs in May. Seeing as I hadn't yet organised the illustrator, typesetter, cover designer or printer, I was a bit taken aback, but we decided to go for it anyway!

I had made a contact while travelling in Ireland in September 2007 who agreed to take on the cover and text design. Once again the internet came in handy, so after reviewing online portfolios and sending out a heap of emails, I selected an illustrator from Brisbane. Her name is Kim Woolley, originally from the UK. Kim had illustrated about 30 children's books in the past and was excited to take on illustrating *"Gang-O Kids"* even with the tight timelines. Finally, Hazel's vast range of contacts put me on



