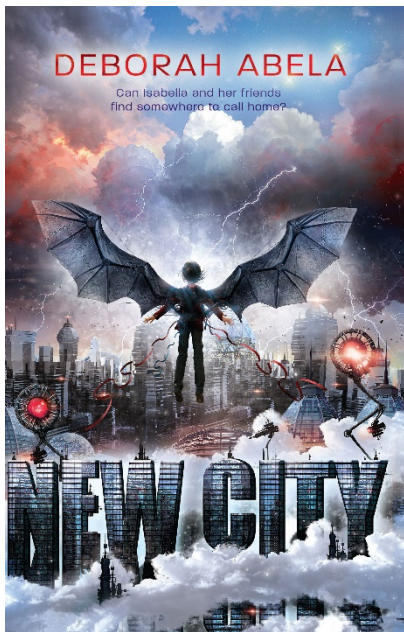


Deborah Abela gives the inside info to Sharon Rundle about writing her latest book '*Grimsdon 02: New City*', a sequel to the popular, best-selling *Grimsdon*.



• **“A *New City* offers a new life - but what kind of life will Isabella and her friends find?**

Isabella and her friends are nervous about what they'll find in the New City. It's inland and it's dry – far from the flooded city they've just left. Will their lives here be as luxurious and carefree as Xavier says? In fact, bleak, uncertain times have brought darkness and danger to New City.

The city has been divided in two: the citizens who have, and those who the ruling Major General says have come to steal from them – the refugees who have fled the rising waters, who are imprisoned in a camp on the edge of the city.

The kids of *Grimsdon* once faced sea monsters and evil harbour lords, but now they face new threats. From freakish weather events that whip up with little warning to the fierce misinformation that swirls around the city to the theft of their freedom, now they face the prison-like restrictions and control of the New City.

Unlike the refugees, they're heralded as heroes. But what does the Major General really want from them?”

• **Grimsdon portrays a world in crisis where the characters are pitted against natural disasters caused by climate change. The characters have to learn to rely on their own resources as well as collaborate to survive. They come up with inventive and imaginative ways to deal with the challenges they face. What was the motivation or impetus to write *Grimsdon 02: New City*?** *Grimsdon is my cranky novel. I was so angry with governments ignoring the science of climate change, that I wanted to write about a crisis that was within our reach to prevent. I used the Thames Barrier as my starting point and the fact that scientists have been aware for many years that one day it won't be enough to protect London from the effects of global warming. To make it more exciting, I created a world where a group of kids are left behind in a flooded Londonesque city with sea monsters, flying machines and sneaker waves. In the sequel, **New City**, the kids have been rescued and taken to a dry inland city that seems almost perfect...there are wind farms, solar fields, pizzerias, ice-cream shops, but the weather has gone crazy, the city is tightly run by an army called the*

Garrison, there are surveillance cameras watching from building tops and the Grimsdon kids discover not everyone is treated equally. There are ornithopters, ice tornados, rescue eagles and a brand new bad guy.

•How much research is behind the creation of your new or changed world in *Grimsdon* and *New City*? How do you create a world that is both logical and recognisable in the way we understand the fundamental laws of nature, yet inventive and imaginative in a futuristic scenario?

I happily delved into a lot of research for both novels. I was very excited about the idea but knew my very unscientific brain would need to a lot of scientific backup to carry it out. I researched the Thames Barrier, read IPCC reports on climate change, studied sea monsters and Leonardo Da Vinci's plans for flying machines. Creating a recognisable world was very important for this novel. I needed both Grimsdon and New City to feel as if they really could exist, because my concern is that what happened to them could happen where we live. I borrowed elements that are very recognisable to modern life in Western society but of course added a few more imaginative elements that significantly change that. So readers are seeing a very different world to ours but in a very familiar guise. My hope is that this would make the truth of the novel resonate much more than if it was pure fantasy.

•Who is your target audience? How did you pitch the concept of *New City* to your publisher and what was their reaction?

*I really enjoy writing for the ages of 8-12. They are not young kids anymore but aren't teenagers either. Their imaginations are alive and active and they're still willing to be transported in story to somewhere very exciting. They have an amazing capacity for empathy, and family and friends are often the centre of their world. These are all very important aspects of the books I write and I was never going to write a sequel to Grimsdon, but I kept receiving letters from kids asking me what happens next. I began thinking the same thing and approached my publisher with the emails and the idea for *New City*. They were reluctant at first because there were a few years between books, but the emails kept coming, Grimsdon became a bestseller and so they agreed, which was very fun for me.*

•How have your readers responded so far to *New City*?

*I was a bit nervous when *New City* was published but so far it has been very exciting. I often ask kids I meet or who write to me to let me know what they think of my books....both good and bad...one email I received recently wrote, 'I didn't think it (*New City*) could get better than Grimsdon but it was stunning! The characters got better, the plot got better, the setting got better and the dialogue got better! I loved it so completely!' (Ruby aged 13) I think kids feel very deeply about the world they live in and they have a very strong sense of injustice.*

New City is published by Random House and is available now in all book shops. Please also see **New Books** section of this issue.



<http://www.randomhouse.com.au/books/deborah-abela/new-city-9781742758558.aspx>

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