

Albany was well and truly Sprung

Maree Dawes titillated the crowd with sensual extracts from her book on Picasso and Alvin Pang – gesticulating wildly – read his poem titled Upgrading about Singaporeans' obsession about home renovation.

A THOUGHT-PROVOKING talk by social commentator Hugh Mackay was the perfect entrée for a feast of creativity during Albany's Sprung Writers Festival at the weekend.

More than 140 enthusiastic patrons packed the Vancouver Arts Centre on Friday evening to hear MacKay and enjoy the opening of the City's annual literary festival.

The centrepiece of the festival was the launch on Saturday of a book on the end of whaling in Australia by former *Albany Advertiser* journalist Chris Pash.

The Last Whale recounts the events that led to the closure of Cheyne Beach Whaling Station in November, 2008 – almost 30 years ago.

The book covers the battle between Albany's tough and colourful whalers and the protesters who went on to form Greenpeace.

It was a historic moment as Greenpeace Australia Pacific chief executive Steve Shallhorn met a group of the former whalers at the launch.

Introducing Pash to the audience, Fremantle Press publisher Ray Coffey said: "Chris has a great nose for telling a story, he takes you right back to the lives and people at the time."

Singaporean poet Alvin Pang brought 27 literature students from the Raffles Institution to the festival to collaborate with Australian poets on Friday night. "Hopefully we will do this on a regular basis now," Pang said.



There was standing room only at the launch of *The Last Whale* by former Albany journalist, media executive Chris Pash.

Saturday night was a rowdy affair as 300 people hit the streets to enjoy *Your Shout*, a "pub poetry crawl with legs" hosted by Glenn Swift.

The crawl started in a bar and moved on to the WA Museum for an open mic session where braver members performed or read their works.

Maree Dawes titillated the crowd with sensual extracts from her book on Picasso and Alvin Pang – gesticulating wildly – read his poem titled *Upgrading* about Singaporeans' obsession with home renovation.

His students stole the evening, taking to the stage in

groups. One performed an a capella version of the pop classic *Stand by Me*.

The event closed on Sunday with *Who's Been Sprung* – "surprises and sextets" from Tobsha Learner, Amanda Curtin, Elizabeth Honey and Dennis Haskell.

As the writers signed books for fans, children's writer Elizabeth Honey reflected on why an event like this worked so well in Albany.

"Albany is a great place to nurture minds," Miss Honey said.

"The whole lovely lie of the land here – it's like an amphitheatre for the sea."