



## ***A Bus Called Heaven - Bob Graham***

**Published by Walker Books, RRP \$29.99**

A broken-down bus appears outside Stella's house one morning. 'Heaven' is painted on a sign taped to the abandoned vehicle. Curious people stop to look at the bus. Neighbours of different nationalities, who rarely speak to each other, discuss the new arrival.

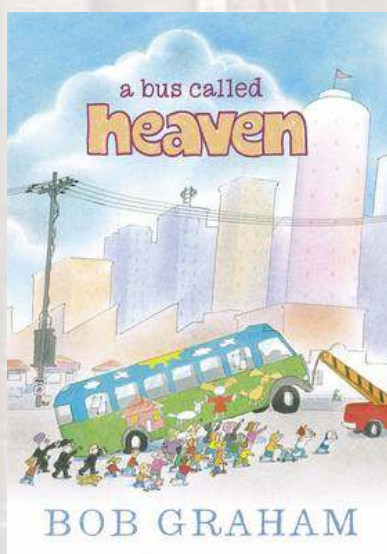
Stella says to her mother, "That old bus is sad as a whale on a beach." Then she pushes open the door and climbs inside. Stella is the colour of moonlight and named as a star. Her pale skin and white clothes make her different. Yet, she is a strong character who becomes a guiding light in her diverse community.

Stella gathers the neighbours to push the bus onto her small front yard, where the wheels stick out onto the pavement. Kids come to play in the bus while adults clean and furnish it. The bus draws people together and turns into a community centre.

However, a dilapidated bus encroaching on the footpath is against city regulations. A truck arrives and tows the bus to a wreckers' yard. But might is not always right. There's strength in the little community that has found a meeting place. Stella is their determined spokesperson and she takes a huge gamble on their behalf.

Bob Graham's colourful illustrations speak louder than words. There are many subtle messages in his warm-hearted artwork. Double-page spreads and overhead perspectives show the impersonal city. While smaller, framed scenes highlight the intimate detail. People group together as the community finds a unified voice. A quality, hardback picture book to enjoy and explore.

**Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett.**



**Promoting the enjoyment of children's literature.**