

SE News
HD **Farewell to a creative retreat**
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Words loom large for popular children's author Paul Jennings.

The ceiling of his study, in the picturesque Warrnambool home he has reluctantly listed for **sale**, is decorated with oversized letters. Here, beneath the alphabet and overlooking the valley in one of Victoria's postcard regions, Jennings has written his whimsical yarns enjoyed by children around the world.

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Since his first book of short stories was published in 1985, Jennings' titles, including classics Grandad's Gifts, the Cabbage Patch and Rascal series and the crazy tales that inspired the popular children's TV show Round the Twist, have been translated into 18 languages, **sold** 8.9 million copies and won scores of literary awards.

Jennings is selling the seaside **property** at 520 Hopkins Point Road so he and his wife, actor Mary-Anne Fahey - best known as Kylie Mole from The Comedy **Company** - can spend more time in Melbourne with her adult children.

They are renovating a home in St Kilda, which is an imposing task given Jennings, 71, underwent a quadruple bypass two months ago and expects to take a year to regain his strength and full health.

The bush retreat - expected to fetch \$1.45 million - has 300-year-old **Chinese** front doors, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves in the walk-through library, exposed beams from a West Australian shearing shed, railway sleeper outdoor seating and decks dropping to sprawling lawns.

"I'm happy to pass it on to someone else. It's a romantic home and a romantic will **buy** it," Jennings said.

Within this idyllic setting, the creative couple have been immersed in their crafts. Fahey is working from the studio on a pilot for a TV show about a psychotherapy clinic for baby boomers, and from the study Jennings has just finished a picture book for year 4, 5 and 6 pupils about a boy who can change like a chameleon.

An adjacent barn on the 21-hectare block is where busloads of schoolchildren come monthly for classes with Jennings.

The British-born writer bought the land about 16 years ago and a soldier's settlement cottage on the **site** has been expanded and developed gradually. The four-bedroom **property**, which has won best use of timber, best kitchen and best extension awards for local designer Donna Monaghan, was a collaborative effort, Jennings said.

"It was another way of expressing myself creatively. It was wonderful to see something in a physical environment go up and to live in it. It is pleasing to have an imprint in a different form of creativity."

A picture of Fahey in character as the sour-faced, bubblegum-popping schoolgirl hangs on the wall in the home, but even that iconic, pop culture image won't distract would-be buyers from the views.

The **property**'s boundary is just 50 metres from the ocean, where southern right whales break the water.

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