

Media Release

Forensic work uncovers Australia's 'lost' poet!

3/8/2015

Described as a “forensic work of recovery”, an extraordinary biography of Australia’s most popular poet CJ Dennis – almost forgotten until now – has won the \$25,000 National Biography Award, announced at the State Library of NSW **TODAY [Monday 3 August 2015]**.

An Unsentimental Bloke (Wakefield Press) by Philip Butterss was awarded Australia’s richest prize for life writing, now in its 20th year, from a field of 72 entries.

The judges praised Butterss for his deeply informed, illuminating and delightfully readable work; “the first full biography of the man who wrote *The Songs of the Sentimental Bloke*, *The Moods of Ginger Mick* and several other classics.”

“*An Unsentimental Bloke* is a meticulously researched account of the life and times of CJ Dennis, possibly the most popular writer ever to pen stories for an Australian audience and far and away the most popular of all Australian poets,” the judges reported.

“It is a fascinating account of Dennis’s public and private life and an illuminating analysis of the literary worlds in which he moved.”

NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive Alex Byrne added: “CJ Dennis was an extraordinarily successful poet whose books were in every home although he has now fallen out of fashion. His rhymes and wry humour, his take on Australia’s growing cities were repeated by all with smiles on their faces. This new biography, *An Unsentimental Bloke*, will restore his prominent place in Australia’s rich literary landscape.”

The other shortlisted authors, who each receive \$1,000, are:

Gabrielle Carey, *Moving Among Strangers: Randolph Stow and My Family* (UQP)

Philip Dwyer, *Citizen Emperor: Napoleon in Power 1799-1815* (Bloomsbury)

David Leser, *To Begin to Know: Walking in the Shadows of My Father* (Allen & Unwin)

Helen O’Neill, *A Singular Vision, Harry Seidler* (Harper Collins Publishers)

Liam Pieper, *The Feel-Good Hit of the Year: A Memoir* (Penguin Books Australia)

The judges for this year’s Award are: Professor Melanie Nolan, the Director of the National Centre of Biography and General Editor of the Australian Dictionary of Biography at the Australian National University; Dr Peter Cochrane, a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; and Rosemary Sorensen, a reviewer and journalist.



National
Biography
AWARD
2015

Media Release



To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the National Biography Award, the State Library is presenting a series of events this week, including the **National Biography Award lecture to be delivered by Kim Williams AM on Wednesday 5 August at 6pm**. The former CEO of FOXTEL and News Corp will talk candidly about a variety of biographies which have inspired and influenced him, as well as discuss his own critically acclaimed memoir *Rules of Engagement*.

For more information, please visit: www.sl.nsw.gov.au/events/

The National Biography Award is administered and presented by the State Library on behalf of Dr Geoffrey Cains and Michael Crouch AO.

For more information and to organise an interview please contact:

Vanessa Bond, Media & Communication Branch, State Library of NSW
(02) 9273 1566, 0411 259 898, vanessa.bond@sl.nsw.gov.au

