

Media Release



STATE LIBRARY®
NEW SOUTH WALES

‘Seriousness of humour’ exposed in Australia’s most amusing writing prize

17/4/2019

From sassy one-liners to elegant and understated wit, the six funniest books published in the last two years have been shortlisted for Australia’s only humour writing prize, the State Library of NSW announced today.

The shortlisted books for the 2019 Russell Prize for Humour Writing, selected from 56 entries, are:

- *The Hunter and other stories of men* by **David Cohen** (Transit Lounge)
- *Boy Swallows Universe* by **Trent Dalton** (HarperCollins Publishers)
- *Deadly Kerfuffle* by **Tony Martin** (Affirm Press)
- *The Drover’s Wives* by **Ryan O’Neill** (Brio Books)
- *The Helen 100* by **Helen Razer** (Allen & Unwin)
- *The Lucky Galah* by **Tracy Sorensen** (Picador Australia)

Author Patti Miller, Chair of the judging panel, commented: “Humour writing is a very elastic and odd-shaped beast – it contains sassy one-liners as well as elegant and understated wit, bawdy guffaws as well as the sharpest irony.”

“This year’s shortlisted writers range from self-deprecating, no-holds-barred memoir to quietly comic fictional worlds - each one in their own way a revelation of the seriousness of humour. Only people who really care about the state of things are truly funny,” Ms Miller said.

The \$10,000 biennial prize is awarded to the best book of humour writing by an Australian author published in the previous two years and aims to celebrate, recognise and encourage the humour writing genre.

The Prize has been made possible by the generous bequest of the late Peter Wentworth Russell, a farmer, businessman and passionate reader and his goddaughter Rachel Hill.

According to State Librarian John Vallance: “If you can’t laugh, you can’t be serious. More than ever we need to laugh and be prepared to laugh at ourselves. It’s an essential part of being human.”

THIS AWARD IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE STATE LIBRARY OF NSW FOUNDATION AND THE GENEROSITY OF THE LATE PETER WENTWORTH RUSSELL.

The Russell Prize
HUMOUR
FOR
Writing

2019

The Russell Prize
HUMOUR
FOR
Writing

2019

Media Release



The winner will be announced at the State Library of NSW on 2 May 2019, as part of the Sydney Writers' Festival.

The event will be hosted by comedian and prize judge Lex Marinos. Some of Australia's funniest people, Susie Youssef, Jordan Raskopoulos and Mark Humphries, will share hilarious readings before the 2019 winner is announced. Bookings here: bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au

Background information:

- Works nominated for the 2019 Russell Prize for Humour Writing must have been first published between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2018, and commercially available within this period.
- Works of fiction and non-fiction, including collections of short stories, poetry and verse were eligible for consideration.
- The prize was first awarded in 2015 to Bernard Cohen's witty novel and political satire, *The Antibibliography of Robert F. Menzies* (HarperCollins Publishers), and in 2017 it was presented to Steve Toltz for his second novel *Quicksand* (Simon Schuster).
- Writers whose works are nominated must be living Australian citizens or persons holding permanent resident status.

The Russell Prize for Humour Writing is part of a suite of awards administered and presented by the State Library.

Media inquiries:

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