

Media Release

Winning biography ‘unmasks’ Australia’s first media magnate

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A gripping biography of Australia’s first media magnate has won this year’s \$25,000 National Biography Award, the State Library of NSW announced today.

The founding father of the Murdoch family empire, Sir Keith Murdoch, (1885–1952) is the fascinating subject of *Before Rupert: Keith Murdoch and the Birth of a Dynasty* (UQP) by Tom DC Roberts, the extraordinary work selected for Australia’s richest biography prize.

The judges praised Roberts for drawing on a remarkable range of untapped sources to provide new insights into a much mythologised life: “*Before Rupert* gives readers a new understanding of Keith Murdoch and the genesis of the family dynasty. The subject is thoroughly yet fairly interrogated, or perhaps we should say unmasked.”

“With the title as a clue, the full meaning of this legacy builds slowly as the masterly crafted narrative reveals the template for corporate ambition that was handed to Rupert. Roberts has successfully isolated what may well be called the ‘Murdoch gene’,” the judges said.

Before Rupert draws on Roberts’ ground-breaking research into the life and legacy of Sir Keith Murdoch, undertaken around the world over a four-year period. This is the media historian’s first book as a sole author.

According to acting NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive Lucy Milne: “Each year the National Biography Award adds to our rich collection of incredible stories about our nation and its people. This year’s winner is an outstanding addition to the collection.”

The shortlisted authors each receive \$1,000:

- **Georgina Arnott**, *The Unknown Judith Wright* (UWA Publishing)
- **Suzanne Falkiner**, *Mick: A Life of Randolph Stow* (UWA Publishing)
- **Kim Mahood**, *Position Doubtful: Mapping landscapes and memories* (Scribe)
- **John Murphy**, *Evatt: A Life* (NewSouth Publishing)
- **P.J. Parker**, *The Long Goodbye* (Hardie Grant Books)

The judges for this year’s Award were Dr Peter Cochrane, author and Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; Rosemary Sorensen, a reviewer and journalist; and Associate Professor Richard White, author and historian with the University of Sydney.

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The annual National Biography Award Lecture will be delivered by 2016 shortlisted author Dr Karen Lamb on Wednesday 2 August at 5:30pm and is titled *A tale finds its teller: writing the biography of Thea Astley*. Cost: \$10, [bookings required](#).

The National Biography Award is administered and presented by the State Library on behalf of its benefactor Michael Crouch AC.

For more information and to organise an interview please contact:
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