

2019 National Biography Award shortlist announced

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Powerful memoirs by debut authors and compelling personal stories of incredible women have been shortlisted for the 2019 National Biography Award, the richest prize in Australia for biography and memoir writing, the State Library of NSW announced **TODAY [Wednesday 26 June 2019]**.

The shortlisted works are:

- *Do Oysters Get Bored? A Curious Life* by **Rozanna Lilley** (UWA Publishing)
- *Miss Ex-Yugoslavia* by **Sofija Stefanovic** (Penguin Random House Australia)
- *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* by **Behrouz Boochani**, translated by **Omid Tofighian** (Picador Australia)
- *One Hundred Years of Dirt* by **Rick Morton** (Melbourne University Press)
- *The Trauma Cleaner: One Woman's Extraordinary Life in Death, Decay & Disaster* by **Sarah Krasnostein** (Text Publishing)
- *The Wasp and the Orchid: The Remarkable Life of Australian Naturalist Edith Coleman* by **Danielle Clode** (Picador Australia)

Senior Judge, Margy Burn commented: "The six outstanding writers on the 2019 shortlist bring finely tuned thinking and writerly capacities to life writing. Memoir and autobiography are strongly represented and none of these exceptional works could be described as traditional biography.

"This year's shortlist features five 'debut' titles," said Ms Burn. "The judges were struck by the many compelling entries from younger writers experimenting with life writing. It bodes well for the future of Australian life writing, if issuing a challenge to conventional biography."

The National Biography Award has a total prize pool of \$42,000. The overall winner will receive \$25,000. The inaugural \$5,000 Michael Crouch AC Award will be awarded to the best debut biography or memoir in honour of the late Library benefactor and former award supporter. In addition, each shortlisted author will receive \$2,000.

The 2019 award attracted 81 entries which were assessed by the judging panel: Margy Burn, Dr Georgina Arnott and Professor Iain McCalman AO.

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Media Release



According to State Librarian Dr John Vallance: “The State Library of NSW continues to develop its reputation as patron and supporter of the best in Australian writing. We all seem to be interested in other people’s lives, and the National Biography Award is a particularly important one for us.”

“I’m delighted that Sam Meers, through the Nelson Meers Foundation, has agreed to continue to make it possible for us to help and encourage our writers in this imaginative and compelling way,” said Dr Vallance. “Sam has increased the pool of prizes very generously and we are excited by the prospect of what will emerge this year.”

The winner will be announced on Monday 12 August 2019 at a champagne breakfast event at the State Library of NSW. Well-known author, journalist and broadcaster Caroline Baum will lead a panel discussion with this year’s shortlisted authors before the winner is announced. The event is open to the public.

Established in 1996 by Dr Geoffrey Cains and generously supported by the late Michael Crouch AC, the National Biography Award is now supported by the Nelson Meers Foundation. It encourages the highest standards of writing in the fields of biography and autobiography and promotes public interest in these genres.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact:

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National Biography AWARD 2019

