

# Media Release

## 2020 National Biography Award shortlist announced

9/7/2020

Compelling biographies of Australian politicians and journalists and gripping memoirs by debut authors have been shortlisted for the 2020 National Biography Award, the richest prize in Australia for biography and memoir writing, the State Library of NSW announced **TODAY [Thursday 9 July 2020]**.

The shortlisted works are:

- *Beyond Words: A Year with Kenneth Cook* by Jacqueline Kent (UQP)
- *Hearing Maud* by Jessica White (UWA Publishing)
- *Idling in Green Places: A Life of Alec Chisholm* by Russell McGregor (Australian Scholarly Publishing)
- *The Girls* by Chloe Higgins (Picador Australia)
- *Things Nobody Knows But Me* by Amra Pajalić (Transit Lounge)
- *Tiberius with a Telephone: The Life and Stories of William McMahon* by Patrick Mullins (Scribe Publications)

Senior Judge Margy Burn commented: “Australian biography has evolved to include a variety of distinct sub-genres. Again, this year memoir features strongly among the entries, alongside more conventional biographies of significant and not so significant people from the past.”

“This year’s shortlist features five ‘debut’ titles, including works from new writers taking innovative approaches to form and structure,” said Ms Burn. “With 89 entries submitted in 2020 there can be no doubt about the continuing interest in life writing from authors, as well as readers.”

The National Biography Award has a total prize pool of \$42,000. The overall winner will receive \$25,000. The \$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 2020 award was assessed by a judging panel comprising of Margy Burn, Professor Mark McKenna and Associate Professor Richard White.

According to State Librarian John Vallance: “The State Library of NSW is arguably the nation’s major patron and supporter of the best in Australian writing. When it comes to people’s lives, our interests are pretty much universal. This is why the National Biography Award is so important for us, and why we are so grateful to the Nelson Meers Foundation for ensuring its survival.”



National  
*Biography* AWARD  
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The winner will be announced on 28 August 2020 at an evening event at the State Library of NSW after a panel discussion with this year's shortlisted authors. 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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