Shortlists announced for
2021 NSW Premier’s Literary Awards

24/3/2021

Contemporary works by leading and emerging Australian writers have been shortlisted for the 2021 NSW Premier’s Literary Awards, the State Library of NSW announced today.

Thirty judges considered a record of 633 entries across 10 prize categories, with the winners to be announced online on the eve of the Sydney Writers’ Festival on Monday 26 April 2021. Up to $305,000 in prize money will be awarded including sponsored awards, making them the richest state-funded literary awards in the country.

NSW Premier, The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, said: “For more than four decades, the Premier’s Literary Awards in NSW have given vital support and encouragement to our literary culture. After more than a year of COVID-19, we could all use an added dose of inspiration during these challenging times. I congratulate every writer who entered and particularly those who have been named on the shortlist.”

According to State Librarian John Vallance: “You can’t guarantee good writing just by giving generous prizes, but there’s no doubt that it helps a lot. The NSW Premier’s Awards continue to attract and encourage the best writing in Australia. I encourage you all to buy these books and read them before the judges announce their final decisions.”

2021 Senior Judge, Jane McCredie, commented: “This year’s shortlists reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary Australia, exploring themes of violence and catastrophe, but also of tenderness and hope. The new and established writers on the shortlists show a mastery of form, bringing skill and insight to the examination of our fraught histories, contested present and uncertain future. I congratulate them all on a remarkable achievement.”

The shortlists for the 2021 NSW Premier’s Literary Awards:
(arranged in alphabetical order by author surname)

Christina Stead Prize for Fiction ($40,000)
A Room Made of Leaves by Kate Grenville (Text Publishing)
Murmurations by Carol Lefevre (Spinifex Press)
Cherry Beach by Laura McPhee-Browne (Text Publishing)
The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams (Affirm Press)
The Weekend by Charlotte Wood (Allen & Unwin)
The Bass Rock by Evie Wyld (Penguin Random House Australia)
Media Release

NSW PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS 2021

Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-fiction ($40,000)

Father of the Lost Boys by Yuot Ajang Alaak (Fremantle Press)
In the Time of the Manaroans by Miro Bilbrough (Victoria University Press)
Womerah Lane: Lives and Landscapes by Tom Carment (Giramondo Publishing)
The Warrior, the Voyager, and the Artist: Three Lives in an Age of Empire by Kate Fullagar (Yale University Press)
A Question of Colour: My Journey to Belonging by Pattie Lees and Adam C Lees (Magabala Books)
The Trials of Portnoy: How Penguin Brought Down Australia’s Censorship System by Patrick Mullins (Scribe Publications)

Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry ($30,000)

Element: The Atomic Weight & Radius of Love by Jordie Albiston (Puncher & Wattman)
Ask Me About the Future by Rebecca Jessen (University of Queensland Press)
A History of What I'll Become by Jill Jones (UWA Publishing)
Change Machine by Jaya Savige (University of Queensland Press)
Throat by Ellen van Neerven (University of Queensland Press)

Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children’s Literature ($30,000)

Action Tank – Book 2 by Mike Barry (Mike Barry Was Here)
Winter of the White Bear by Martin Ed Chatterton (Dirt Lane Press Inc)
Across the Risen Sea by Bren MacDibble (Allen & Unwin)
I Heart the World: A Celebration of Land, Sea, Flora, Fauna and People Around the Globe by Tania McCartney (Hardie Grant Publishing)
The Grandest Bookshop in the World by Amelia Mellor (Affirm Press)
Her Perilous Mansion by Sean Williams (Allen & Unwin)

Ethel Turner Prize for Young Adult’s Literature ($30,000)

The F Team by Rawah Arja (Giramondo Publishing)
The End of the World is Bigger than Love by Davina Bell (Text Publishing)
Ghost Bird by Lisa Fuller (University of Queensland Press)
Metal Fish, Falling Snow by Cath Moore (Text Publishing)
Where We Begin by Christie Nieman (Pan Macmillan Australia)
Loner by Georgina Young (Text Publishing)

Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting ($30,000)

Triple X by Glace Chase (Queensland Theatre/ Sydney Theatre Company)
Lady Tabouli by James Elazzi (National Theatre of Parramatta)
No Pay? No Way! by Marieke Hardy (Sydney Theatre Company)
The Visitors by Jane Harrison (Moogahlin)
Packer & Sons by Tommy Murphy (Belvoir)
Milk by Dylan Van Den Berg (The Street Theatre)
Betty Roland Prize for Scriptwriting ($30,000)

*FREEMAN* by Laurence Billiet (General Strike and Matchbox Pictures)
*Penguin Bloom* by Shaun Grant and Harry Cripps (Made Up Stories, Broadtalk and JamTart)
*Stateless, Episode 6: The Seventh Circle* by Elise McCredie (Matchbox Pictures)

Multicultural NSW Award ($20,000)

*After Australia* edited by Michael Mohammed Ahmad (Affirm Press)
*The F Team* by Rawah Arja (Giramondo Publishing)
*Metal Fish, Falling Snow* by Cath Moore (Text Publishing)
*The Coconut Children* by Vivian Pham (Penguin Random House Australia)
*A Lonely Girl is a Dangerous Thing* by Jessie Tu (Allen & Unwin)
*Throat* by Ellen van Neerven (University of Queensland Press)

NSW Translation Prize ($30,000 - biennial award)

*This Tilting World* by Colette Fellous, translated by Sophie Rebecca Lewis (Two Lines Press & Les Fugitives)
*Travels with a Writing Brush: Classical Japanese Travel Writing from the Manyoshu to Basho* translated by Meredith McKinney (Penguin Random House Publishing)
*Autumn Manuscripts* by Tasos Leivaditis, translated by N.N. Trakakis (Smokestack Books)
*Sergius Seeks Bacchus* by Norman Erikson Pasaribu, translated by Tiffany Tsao (Giramondo Publishing)
*Imminence* by Mariana Dimopulo, translated by Alice Whitmore (Giramondo Publishing)
*Russia Washed in Blood: A Novel in Fragments* by Artyom Vesyoly, translated by Kevin Windle (Anthem Press)

UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing ($5,000)

*The Octopus and I* by Erin Hortle (Allen & Unwin)
*Cherry Beach* by Laura McPhee-Browne (Text Publishing)
*A Couple of Things Before the End* by Sean O’Beirne (Black Inc.)
*Song of the Crocodile* by Nardi Simpson (Hachette Australia)
*The Inland Sea* by Madeleine Watts (ONE an imprint of Pushkin Press)

People’s Choice Award

Voting opens today for the People’s Choice Award. The winner will be chosen by the public from the shortlist for the 2021 Christina Stead Prize for Fiction. Vote today via the State Library of NSW website: www.sl.nsw.gov.au/peopleschoice.

The winner will be announced in an online presentation of the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards on 26 April 2021. Visit the State Library of NSW website for details.
Background notes

- Works nominated for the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards must have been first published, performed or screened between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020. This period does not apply to the NSW Translation Prize.
- Writers and illustrators whose works are nominated must be living Australian citizens or persons holding permanent resident status.
- The Awards are judged by an independent committee of writers, academics, critics and other sector professionals who have been appointed by the Premier or the Minister for the Arts or their delegates.
- The inaugural NSW Premier’s Literary Awards were presented in 1979 by Premier Neville Wran and were the first Premier’s literary awards to be offered in Australia.
- A Book of the Year may be chosen by the judging panel from among the winners of the individual prizes, and the Government may, at its discretion, make an additional payment of $10,000 prize money to the writer of the work so designated.

The NSW Premier’s Literary Awards are administered by the State Library of NSW in association with Create NSW. The State Library of NSW acknowledges the sponsorship of Multicultural NSW and the University of Technology Sydney. For more information please contact: The Senior Project Officer, Awards, State Library of NSW (02) 9273 1582 or (02) 9273 1605 or awards@sl.nsw.gov.au

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