

# Media Release



## Nakkiah Lui wins Australia's only prize for humour writing

17/6/2021

Nakkiah Lui's perceptive, surprising and laugh-out-loud play *Black is the New White* has won the \$10,000 biennial Russell Prize for Humour Writing, Australia's only humour writing prize, the State Library of NSW announced **TONIGHT [Thursday 17 June]**.

The judges praised *Black is the New White* as "doubly important at a time when it has become unfashionable to focus on class among so many other 'identities' from which to choose. Lui reminds us that the deepest divisions are always about wealth and power. And she makes us grin, chuckle, snigger and wriggle uneasily as she does so."

*Black is the New White* was selected from a diverse field of 48 entries by judges Mark Dapin, Joy Lawn, Piers Grove and Bernard Cohen. The shortlist comprised:

- *The F Team* by Rawah Arja (Giramondo Publishing)
- *Mammoth* by Chris Flynn (University of Queensland Press)
- *Factory 19* by Dennis Glover (Black Inc.)
- *It Sounded Better in My Head* by Nina Kenwood (Text Publishing)
- *Burger Force Vol. 4: Punishment* by Jackie Ryan (Parentheses Press)

Chair of the judging panel, author and journalist Mark Dapin commented: "It's wonderful that a piece of writing that is both culturally and politically important – and written to be performed – should also be laugh-out-loud funny on the printed page."

The \$10,000 biennial prize has been made possible by the generous donation from the late Peter Wentworth Russell, a farmer, businessman and passionate reader, and his goddaughter Rachel Hill, to celebrate, recognise and encourage the humour writing genre.

"Laughter is often the medicine that helps us swallow the harder times and keeps us moving forward and adapting. In our current environment humour is more important than ever, so read spoonfuls and keep yourself healthy on the inside!" commented Rachel Hill.

This year the inaugural \$5,000 Humour Writing for Young People Award was offered for a published work intended for readers between the ages of 5 and 12 years.

INCLUDING

Humour Writing for  
**Young People**

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**  
Writing 2021

The Russell Prize  
**Humour**  
Writing 2021

# Media Release



“We were excited to invite a panel of primary school students to choose the stand-out work that makes young people laugh,” said Mitchell Librarian Richard Neville.

Philip Bunting’s *Wombat* (Scholastic Australia) was announced as the winner in an online ceremony earlier today; the judges describing it as a “magical journey through ‘wombatmanity’ with marvellously naïve illustrations and captivatingly rhythmic prose.”

**Background information:**

- Works nominated for the 2021 Russell Prize for Humour Writing must have been first published between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2020, and commercially available within this period.
- Works of fiction and non-fiction, including collections of short stories, poetry and verse were eligible for consideration.
- Previous prize winners are: *The Antibibliography of Robert F. Menzies* by Bernard Cohen (2015), *Quicksand* by Steve Toltz (2017) and *The Hunter and Other Stories of Men* by David Cohen (2019).
- Writers whose works are nominated must be living Australian citizens or persons holding permanent resident status.

**Media contact:**

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

INCLUDING

Humour Writing for  
**Young People**



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