

Media Release



Shortlists announced for 2024 NSW Premier's Literary Awards

3/5/2024

The shortlists for the 2024 NSW Premier's Literary Awards — the longest-running state-funded Awards in the country — have just been announced, with 54 outstanding works by 60 authors and illustrators selected by 32 judges across 12 prize categories from 834 entries.

The NSW Premier's Literary Awards, established in 1979, were the first Premier's Literary Awards to be offered in Australia. For 42 years these Awards have celebrated Australia's best writers and played a pivotal role in fostering a rich and diverse literary culture across the state. Past winners have included such notable writers as Peter Carey, David Malouf AO, Elizabeth Jolley, Thomas Keneally AO, Helen Garner, Michelle de Kretser, Peter Polites, Michael Mohammed Ahmad and Ellen van Neerven.

NSW Minister for Arts John Graham said: "Through the power of words, writers ignite our imagination, inspire deep reflection, and transport us to both real and fantastical worlds. This Government has a long and proud history of supporting excellence in literature and history. The NSW Premier's Literary Awards highlight the Government's ongoing commitment to celebrating the outstanding achievements of Australian writers."

According to State Librarian Dr Caroline Butler-Bowdon: "These prestigious Awards bring to the forefront the power of storytelling to inspire, challenge, and connect us all. We hope as many readers as possible take the opportunity to explore this impressive list of shortlisted works."

The Awards are administered by the State Library of NSW in association with Create NSW and judged by an independent committee of writers, academics, critics and other sector professionals.

2024 Senior Judge Dr Bernadette Brennan commented: "Unsurprisingly a considerable number of this year's shortlisted texts address the complexities of grief, trauma and the multitudinous effects of an ever-present past. The quality of writing, the range of voices, forms and stories, and often the sheer daring of these narratives, attest to the breadth and depth of Australia's literary talent."

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The shortlists for the 2024 NSW Premier's Literary Awards: (arranged in alphabetical order by author surname)

Christina Stead Prize for Fiction (\$40,000)

- *The Sun Walks Down* by Fiona McFarlane (Allen & Unwin)
- *Prima Facie* by Suzie Miller (Pan Macmillan Australia)
- *The Sitter* by Angela O'Keeffe (UQP)
- *Shirley* by Ronnie Scott (Penguin Random House Australia)
- *The Crying Room* by Gretchen Shirm (Transit Lounge)
- *Praiseworthy* by Alexis Wright (Giramondo Publishing) (also shortlisted for Indigenous Writers' Prize)

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

- *Childhood* by Shannon Burns (Text Publishing) (also shortlisted for UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing)
- *Ghosts of the Orphanage: A Story of Mysterious Deaths, A Conspiracy of Silence, and a Search for Justice* by Christine Kenneally (Hachette Australia)
- *Here Be Monsters: Is Technology Reducing Our Humanity?* by Richard King (Monash University Publishing)
- *Our Concealed Ballast* by Marian Macken (Vagabond Press)
- *Personal Score: Sport, Culture, Identity* by Ellen van Neerven (UQP) (also shortlisted for Indigenous Writers' Prize)
- *The God of No Good* by Sita Walker (Ultimo Press)

Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry (\$30,000)

- *Hunger and Predation* by Pooja Mittal Biswas (Cordite Publishing)
- *Moon Wrasse* by Willo Drummond (Puncher & Wattmann)
- *Burn* by Libby Hart (Lepus Print)
- *Spore or Seed* by Caitlin Maling (Fremantle Press)
- *Non-Essential Work* by Omar Sakr (UQP) (also shortlisted for Multicultural NSW Award)
- *Riverbed Sky Songs* by Tais Rose Wae (Vagabond Press)

Highly Commended

- *Like to the Lark* by Stuart Barnes (Upswell Publishing)
- *I Saw the Best Memes of My Generation* by Dominic Symes (Recent Work Press)

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

- *Leaf-light* by Trace Balla (Allen & Unwin Children's Publishing)
- *Picasso and the Greatest Show on Earth* by Anna Fienberg (Allen & Unwin Children's Publishing)
- *The Raven's Song* by Zana Fraillon and Bren MacDibble (Allen & Unwin Children's Publishing)
- *Songlines: First Knowledges for younger readers* by Margo Neale, Lynne Kelly and illustrated by Blak Douglas (Thames & Hudson Australia)
- *Paradise Sands: A Story of Enchantment* by Levi Pinfold (Walker Books Australia)
- *Australia: Country of Colour* by Jess Racklyeft (Affirm Press)

Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature (\$30,000)

- *Royals* by Tegan Bennett Daylight (Simon & Schuster Australia)
- *Grace Notes* by Karen Comer (Hachette Australia) (also shortlisted for UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing)
- *The Quiet and the Loud* by Helena Fox (Pan Macmillan Australia)
- *We Could Be Something* by Will Kostakis (Allen & Unwin Children's Publishing)
- *We Didn't Think It Through* by Gary Lonesborough (Allen & Unwin Children's Publishing) (also shortlisted for Indigenous Writers' Prize)
- *Selfie* by Allayne L Webster (Text Publishing)

Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting (\$30,000)

- *Telethon Kid* by Alistair Baldwin (Malthouse Theatre)
- *don't ask what the bird look like* by Hannah Belanzky (Queensland Theatre) (also shortlisted for UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing)
- *Sex Magick* by Nicholas Brown (Griffin Theatre Company & Currency Press)
- *Unprecedented* by Champion Decent (HotHouse Theatre)
- *RBG: Of Many, One* by Suzie Miller (Sydney Theatre Company & Currency Press)
- *Blue* by Thomas Weatherall (Belvoir Street Theatre)

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Betty Roland Prize for Scriptwriting (\$30,000)

- *Safe Home*, Episode 1 by Anna Barnes (Kindling Pictures)
- *The Giants* by Laurence Billiet and Rachael Antony (General Strike & Matchbox Pictures)
- *Late Night with the Devil* by Cameron Cairnes and Colin Cairnes (Future Pictures)
- *Poor Things* by Tony McNamara (Searchlight Pictures & Element Pictures)
- *Shayda* by Noora Niasari (Origma 45, Dirty Films & Parandeh Pictures)
- *The New Boy* by Warwick Thornton (Dirty Films & Scarlett Pictures)

Highly Commended

The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart, Episode 1, 'Black Fire Orchid' by Sarah Lambert
(Made Up Stories & Amazon Prime)

Indigenous Writers' Prize (\$30,000)

- *Close to the Subject: Selected Works* by Daniel Browning (Magabala Books)
- *She is the Earth* by Ali Cobby Eckermann (Magabala Books)
- *We Didn't Think It Through* by Gary Lonesborough (Allen & Unwin Children's Publishing) (also shortlisted for Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature)
- *Firelight* by John Morrissey (Text Publishing) (also shortlisted for UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing)
- *Personal Score: Sport, Culture, Identity* by Ellen van Neerven (UQP) (also shortlisted for Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction)
- *Praiseworthy* by Alexis Wright (Giramondo Publishing) (also shortlisted for Christina Stead Prize for Fiction)

Multicultural NSW Award (\$30,000 — sponsored by Multicultural NSW)

- *Anam* by André Dao (Penguin Random House Australia) (also shortlisted for UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing)
- *The Shape of Dust: A father wrongly imprisoned. A daughter's quest to free him* by Lamisse Hamouda (Pantera Press)
- *Stay for Dinner* by Sandhya Parappukkaran, illustrated by Michelle Pereira (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing)
- *God Forgets About the Poor* by Peter Polites (Ultimo Press)
- *Non-Essential Work* by Omar Sakr (UQP) (also shortlisted for Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry)
- *Songs for the Dead and the Living* by Sara M Saleh (Affirm Press)

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UTS Glenda Adams Award for New Writing (\$5000 — sponsored by UTS)

- *Elegy for an Elephant* by Ryan Abramowitz (Narratives of Nature)
- *the body country* by Susie Anderson (Hachette Australia)
- *don't ask what the bird look like* by Hannah Belanzky (Queensland Theatre) (also shortlisted for Nick Enright Prize for Playwriting)
- *You'll Never Find Me* by Indianna Bell (Stakeout Films)
- *Childhood* by Shannon Burns (Text Publishing) (also shortlisted for Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction)
- *Grace Notes* by Karen Comer (Hachette Australia) (also shortlisted for Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature)
- *Anam* by André Dao (Penguin Random House Australia) (also shortlisted for Multicultural NSW Award)
- *as good a woman as ever broke bread* by Alex McInnis (Puncher & Wattmann)
- *Firelight* by John Morrissey (Text Publishing) (also shortlisted for Indigenous Writers' Prize)

The winners of the Premier's Literary Awards will be announced at the start of the Sydney Writers' Festival on Monday 20 May 2024.

University of Sydney People's Choice Award

Voting opens today for the University of Sydney People's Choice Award. The winner will be chosen by the public from the shortlist for the 2024 Christina Stead Prize for Fiction and the Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction. Vote today via the State Library of NSW website: sl.nsw.gov.au

The winner will be announced at the presentation of the NSW Premier's Literary Awards at the State Library of NSW on 20 May 2024. Register to attend the winner announcement via the State Library of NSW website: sl.nsw.nsw.gov.au/pla

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Background notes

- Works nominated for the 2024 NSW Premier's Literary Awards must have been first published, performed or screened between 1 October 2022 and 30 September 2023.
- 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. The 2024 judging panel of 32 judges was approved by the government on 21 August 2023.
- Each Award category is judged by a panel of three to five independent judges and assessed in line with the NSW Premier's Literary Awards 2024 Guidelines and the formal judging procedures in place to ensure impartiality.
- 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. Recent Book of the Year winners include: Debra Dank for *We Come With This Place* (2023), Safdar Ahmed for *Still Alive* (2022), Ellen van Neerven for *Throat* (2021), Tara June Winch for *The Yield* (2020) and Billy Griffiths for *Deep Time Dreaming* (2019).
- 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, the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney.

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