



WINNERS OF THE 2026 VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Wednesday 25 February

Australia's richest state-based literary prize, the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards (VPLAs), announced their 2026 winners at a ceremony in Melbourne this evening. Drawn from the eight category winners, the Victorian Prize for Literature – the program's most prestigious award, worth \$100,000 – was presented to Evelyn Araluen for *The Rot*, with Araluen also taking home the Prize for Indigenous Writing.

Also shortlisted for the Prize for Poetry, *The Rot* drew praise from judges for its 'vulnerable, taut and uncompromising' power of Araluen's second collection. A former recipient of The Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter Fellowship, the Goorie and Koori poet, editor and educator was among several Victorian writers celebrated this year, with fellow locals **Emilie Collyer**, **Zeno Sworder** and **Micaela Sahhar** also named winners in their respective categories.

This year's Writing for Young Adults category was renamed the John Marsden Prize, in a special tribute to the acclaimed writer, teacher and mentor. **Margot McGovern's** gripping horror novel *This Stays Between Us* was awarded the **John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults**. Ros Marsden was on hand to present the prize, with McGovern acknowledging Marsden's enduring influence on generations of young readers and writers in her acceptance speech.

The Wheeler Centre, CEO Erin Vincent, said: 'Congratulations to all the winners of this year's Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. These awards are a highlight of the national literary calendar, and The Wheeler Centre is proud to deliver them on behalf of the Victorian Government. The awards celebrate the extraordinary talent of Australian writers and the powerful role stories play in our lives. We're thrilled to see two of this year's winners are former fellows of The Wheeler Centre's landmark Next Chapter writing program, which highlights just how important it is to support writers at every stage of their careers.'

Alongside Araluen's win in the Indigenous Writing category and McGovern's win for the John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults, the cohort of 2026 VPLA winners served to showcase the breadth, ambition and diversity of Australia's contemporary literary landscape.

Omar Musa's 'expansive and tenderly intimate glorious family saga', *Fierceland*, took out the Fiction category and **Micaela Sahhar**, another Wheeler Centre Next Chapter Fellowship recipient, was recognised in Non-Fiction for her remarkable debut memoir, *Find Me at the Jaffa Gate: An Encyclopaedia of a Palestinian Family*.

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Eunice Andrada was awarded the **Prize for Poetry** for her third collection, **KONTRA**; the hilarious and poignant **Super** by **Emilie Collyer** received the **Prize for Drama**; and **Zeno Sworder** whose 'luminous elegy on memory, loss and regeneration,' **Once I Was a Giant**, was selected for the **Prize for Children's Literature**.

Described by the judges as a 'moving and authentically drawn portrait of grief, care and growing old,' **Charlotte Guest's The Kookaburra** was awarded the Prize for an Unpublished Manuscript. A writer and bookseller from Geelong, Guest follows in the footsteps of previous VPLA Prize for an Unpublished Manuscript winners Graeme Simsion (*The Rosie Project*), Jane Harper (*The Dry*) and Maxine Beneba Clarke (*Foreign Soil*), amongst many other now bestselling authors.

The Wheeler Centre's 2026 People's Choice Award winner was **Randa Abdel-Fattah's Discipline**. Nominated as Highly Commended in the Fiction category, **Discipline** was nominated by the voting public and awarded a cash prize of \$2,000, funded by The Wheeler Centre.

The winners of the Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Indigenous Writing, Children's Literature and the John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults categories each receive \$25,000. The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript carries a \$15,000 prize and includes a two-week residency at McCraith House in Dromana, delivered in partnership between The Wheeler Centre and RMIT Culture.

– ENDS –

Media contact

Alice Lewinsky
alice@commonstate.co
0403 837 351

Media centre

Images of the 2026 VPLA winners are available for download [here](#).

NOTES TO EDITOR

- The winners of the 2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards (VPLAs) were announced at the ceremony held at The Edge in Federation Square on Wednesday 25 February
- The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards (VPLAs) are administered by The Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Premier of Victoria
- The Prize for Writing for Young Adults has been renamed in honour of John Marsden for the 2026 Awards

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- The John Clarke Award for Humour Writing is awarded every other year and will return for the 2027 Awards for books published between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2026
- The winner of the Victorian Prize for Literature is awarded \$100,000. The winner also receives \$25,000 for their category win.
- The winners of the Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Award for Indigenous Writing, Children's Literature and John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults categories are each awarded AUD\$25,000
- The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript receives \$15,000 and a two-week residency at McCraith House through RMIT Culture
- The total VPLAs prize pool is \$292,000 which includes the \$2,000 People's Choice Award (supported by The Wheeler Centre)
- All prizes are in \$AUD

FULL LIST OF WINNERS BELOW

2026 VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS WINNERS

Victorian Prize for Literature

The Rot by Evelyn Araluen (University of Queensland Press)

Prize for Fiction

Fierceland by Omar Musa (Penguin Random House Australia)

Prize for Non-Fiction

Find Me at the Jaffa Gate: An encyclopaedia of a Palestinian family by Micaela Sahhar (NewSouth)

Prize for Poetry

KONTRA by Eunice Andrada (Giramondo Publishing)

Prize for Drama

Super by Emilie Collyer (Currency Press and Red Stitch Actors' Theatre)

Prize for Indigenous Writing

The Rot by Evelyn Araluen (University of Queensland Press)

Prize for Children's Literature

Once I Was a Giant by Zeno Sworder (Thames and Hudson Australia)

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The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

176 Little Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
+61 3 9094 7809

John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults

This Stays Between Us by Margot McGovern (Penguin Random House Australia)

Prize for an Unpublished Manuscript

The Kookaburra by Charlotte Guest

People's Choice Award

Discipline by Randa Abdel-Fattah (University of Queensland Press)

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