

# 2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

## Conditions and Guidelines

### General Information

The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards were established in 1985 by The Hon. John Cain, Premier of Victoria, to mark the centenary of the births of Vance and Nettie Palmer and to honour and reward literary achievement by Australian writers.

Now in their 41st year, the Awards have received bipartisan support since their inception. In 2026, the Awards have a total prize pool of \$292,000.

The Victorian government has established the following vision and aims for the Awards:

- promote Victorian leadership by honouring Australian literature, ideas, innovation and learning;
- recognise excellence in Australian writing and in contributions to the development of Australian culture;
- advance the Victorian community's appreciation of Australian literature and encourage a commitment to reading;
- assist living authors in their careers and promote Victoria's literary and publishing industries.

The Awards are administered by The Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Premier of Victoria.

### The 2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

The winners of the main suite of awards – the prizes for Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Drama, John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults, Children's Literature and Indigenous Writing – each receive \$25,000. The winners of the seven main suite categories go on to contest the overall Victorian Prize for Literature, worth an additional \$100,000. This is the single most valuable literary award in the country. The winner of the Award for an Unpublished Manuscript receives \$15,000. The winner of the People's Choice Award receives \$2000.

Winners for all categories will be announced at the Award Ceremony on Wednesday 25 February 2026.

For information about the Awards, please see <https://www.wheelercentre.com/victorian-premiers-literary-awards/>

## Timeline: The 2025 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

Monday 21 July 2025	Entries open
Friday 29 August 2025	Entries close at 5.00pm AEST Physical books due at The Wheeler Centre
Friday 12 September 2025	Final date that physical books will be accepted
Early December 2025	Shortlists announced
Wednesday 25 February 2026	Winners announced at VPLA ceremony

## Eligibility

1. Authors must be living at the time of entry. For the prizes for Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Writing for Young Adults and Children's Literature authors must be Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia. For the Prize for Indigenous Writing, authors must be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
2. The 2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards are for books published in English.
3. For awards in the categories of Fiction, Non-fiction, Poetry, Drama, Writing for Young Adults, Children's Literature, Indigenous Writing, this includes books made available to Australian readers during the eligibility period of 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. The John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing will open again in 2026, for books made available to Australian readers during the eligibility period of 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026.
4. Short stories are eligible if they are entered as a published collection by a single author.
5. Ineligible works include single poems, essays or short stories published in anthologies with multiple contributors or in literary journals.
6. These Awards are for new work. Works will not be eligible if a significant proportion has been previously published in a book. Material that has previously been published in part in anthologies or literary journals is deemed to be new. To this end, it is the publisher's or nominator's responsibility to identify previously published material clearly.
7. E-books are eligible for the Awards if it is the work's original publication format.
8. Self-published works are eligible for entry if they have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and are available to the general public via more than one distribution channel.
9. If an eligible book has not been published by the final date physical copies will be accepted, the book can be submitted as an advance proof copy along with a PDF file, or as a PDF file only.
  - 9.1 Bound manuscripts, including Drama scripts, will not be accepted.

## Authorship

10. The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards are for original works as defined above. The following guidelines define authorship:
  - 10.1 Works co-authored by more than two authors are ineligible, except where there is a significant creative collaboration across the entirety of the work. For example, oral histories and collectively authored works may be considered. Essay collections and

edited anthologies with more than two contributors, where each chapter or section is written by a different individual writer, are not eligible.

It is the responsibility of the nominator to acknowledge joint authorship correctly. Please contact us to discuss the eligibility of a co-authored book with more than two authors if you have any questions.

10.2 The nominated work must be the author's own original work.

10.3 Works may not be entered in the name of a committee.

## General

11. All works must be in English. Bilingual editions where one of the languages used is English are also eligible.

12. All reasonable care will be taken with works submitted but no responsibility is accepted for loss or damage to books or other material received as nominations.

13. No work can enter more than one Victorian Premier's Literary Awards category, except works entered in the Prize for Indigenous Writing. Eligible works entered for one of the other six Victorian Premier's Literary Awards categories can also be entered into the Prize for Indigenous Writing at no additional cost.

14. In all cases not covered by these conditions and guidelines, or where there may be scope for interpretation, the nominator should seek clarification from the Awards Coordinator at [vpla@wheelercentre.com](mailto:vpla@wheelercentre.com) or (03) 9094 7802.

15. The Wheeler Centre administers the Awards on behalf of the Premier of Victoria. In all matters relating to conditions of entry, the decision of The Wheeler Centre in consultation with the Premier is final. In all matters relating to judging of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, the decision of The Wheeler Centre in consultation with the judges and the Premier of Victoria is final.

16. Breach of the conditions of entry will render an entry invalid.

## Nomination

17. An entry form for each work must be submitted online along with a PDF file of the nominated work.

18. Physical copies of the nominated work must be mailed along after the entry form is completed.

18.1 Entries can be either posted or couriered to The Wheeler Centre.

Courier:  
Victorian Premier's Literary Awards  
C/o The Wheeler Centre  
176 Little Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne  
Vic 3000

Post:  
Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

C/o The Wheeler Centre  
GPO Box 1753  
Melbourne  
Vic 3001

18.2 Works will not be returned.

19. The number of copies of works that need to be submitted is specified in the information provided for each category. In the event of a work being shortlisted, additional copies may be required.

19.1 If more than one category is being entered, physical copies must be sent for each category.

20. In addition to hard copies, works must also be submitted as a digital PDF file using the naming convention: surname\_first name initial\_title.pdf

21. Works may be submitted by writers, publishers, production companies or literary agents. There is no limit to the number of titles that may be entered by a nominator or author, provided the works entered meet all other entry requirements.

22. People or organisations nominating works on behalf of an author must do so with the author's consent. It is the responsibility of the nominator to ensure and demonstrate that the author's consent is obtained before nominating the work.

23. If you are unable to complete the online entry form, please contact the Awards Coordinator at [vp1a@wheelercentre.com](mailto:vp1a@wheelercentre.com) or (03) 9094 7802 well in advance of the closing date to make alternative arrangements.

24. Nomination forms must be received by the Wheeler Centre no later than 5.00pm (AEST) Friday 29 August, 2025.

24.1 Physical copies, if available, must be received by The Wheeler Centre by Friday 12 September 2025.

24.2 Entries received after these deadlines will not be accepted.

## Entry Fee

25. An entry fee of \$100 including GST applies for each entry in all categories, unless the entrant is a full Small Press Network member whereby the entry fee will be waived for up to five entries per publisher. If a book is being simultaneously entered in the Prize for Indigenous Writing and another Awards category, one entry form can be submitted and only one entry fee needs to be paid.

26. Payment can be made by either:

- the online form (preferred)
- via direct funds transfer (contact the Awards Coordinator to confirm arrangements)

## The Prize for Fiction

27. The Prize for Fiction is offered for a novel or collection of short stories by a single author and first published and made available in Australia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.
28. Five (5) hard copies AND a PDF file of the nominated book must be submitted. If hard copies are unavailable, you may submit a PDF file of the nominated book.

## The Prize for Non-Fiction

29. The Prize for Non-Fiction is offered for a work of non-fiction first published and made available in Australia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.
30. Books consisting principally of photographs or illustrations will be ineligible unless the accompanying text is of substantial length. As a guide, this is approximately 60,000 words.
31. Six (6) hard copies AND a PDF file of the nominated work must be submitted. If hard copies are unavailable, you may submit a PDF file of the nominated book.

## The Prize for Poetry

32. The Prize for Poetry is offered for a collection of new work by a poet, first published and made available in Australia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.
33. Four (4) hard copies AND a PDF file of the nominated work must be submitted. If hard copies are unavailable, you may submit a PDF file of the nominated book.

## The Prize for Drama

34. The Prize for Drama is offered for scripts written for theatre, musical theatre or radio that fulfil one of the following criteria:
  - 34.1 Theatre and musical theatre scripts first produced in Australia by a professional theatre company for an audience between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Workshops or readings are not deemed to constitute professional performance.
  - 34.2 Radio scripts first broadcast within Australia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.
35. The Prize for Drama will be judged primarily on an assessment of the excellence and literary merit of the work nominated, and not on the merits of a particular production.
36. Adaptations will be eligible if, in the view of the judges, they represent a significant and creative transformation of the original text.
37. Works that have previously been performed overseas are eligible so long as the time between the Australian premiere and overseas premiere is no more than two years.
38. For productions premiering after the entry closing date without a final performance script, please contact the Awards Coordinator to discuss eligibility to be entered into the following year's Awards.
39. Four (4) hard copies (where available) AND a PDF file of the nominated work must be submitted (and where music has been a component of the work, you may submit files via

Dropbox or Google Drive). Where scripts have not been published, a PDF file of the script can be sent. For musical theatre nominations, four (4) copies of the vocal score and script must be submitted together with a recording of the work submitted via Dropbox or Google Drive. Where orchestral/band scores of the work are available, four (4) copies should also be submitted.

## The John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults

40. The John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults is offered for a published work written for a readership aged between 13 and 18 years old, first published and made available for sale in Australia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.

40.1 Publishers may also submit books that are appropriate to young adult readers but not published under a young adult imprint.

41. Excellence and literary merit will be the major judging criteria. In the case of illustrated books, the additional criterion of literary and artistic unity will be considered.

42. Four (4) hard copies AND a PDF file of the nominated work must be submitted. If hard copies are unavailable, you may submit a PDF file of the book.

## The Prize for Children's Literature

43. The Prize for Children's Literature is offered for a published work written for a readership aged between 0 and 12 years old, first published and made available for sale in Australia between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.

44. Excellence and literary merit will be the major judging criteria. In the case of illustrated books, the additional criterion of literary and artistic unity will be considered. If the judges deem the original illustrations within the book to be integral to the merit of the work, the award may be shared by the author and illustrator.

45. Four (4) hard copies AND a PDF file of the nominated work must be submitted. If hard copies are unavailable, you may submit a PDF file of the book.

## The Prize for Indigenous Writing

46. The Prize for Indigenous Writing is an annual award to recognise excellence and literary merit in all categories of work written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors. This includes fiction, non-fiction, poetry, plays and works for teenagers and children.

47. The Prize is open to those who are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and who are accepted as such by their communities.

48. Works of joint authorship are eligible for entry on the condition that at least 50% of the creative work is by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander author.

49. Anthologies are not eligible for this award.

50. Books must have been first published and made available in Australia between 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025.

51. Four (4) hard copies AND a PDF file of the nominated work must be submitted, in addition to any copies already submitted if the title is also being entered in one of the other Victorian Premier's Literary Awards categories. If hard copies are unavailable, you may submit a PDF file of the nominated book.