

2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript by an emerging Victorian writer

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 2025, 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

In addition to the Award for an Unpublished Manuscript by an emerging Victorian writer, the 2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards include the prizes for Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Drama, John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults, Children's Literature and Indigenous Writing, as well as the People's Choice Award. Winners for all categories will be announced at the Award ceremony at The Edge, Fed Square, on Wednesday 25 February 2026.

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

The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript by an emerging Victorian writer

The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript is offered to a Victorian resident for an unpublished fiction manuscript, which may take the form of either a collection of stories or a novel.

The winner of the Award for Unpublished Manuscript will receive \$15,000 in prize money. They will also receive a two-week residency at McCraith House on the Mornington Peninsula, thanks to RMIT University.

Timeline: The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript 2025

Entries open	Monday 21 July 2025
Entries close	Friday 29 August, 2025, 5pm AEST
Shortlist announced via wheelercentre.com	Tuesday 9 December 2025
Winner announced	Wednesday 25 February 2026

Conditions and Guidelines

1. All works must be in English. Bilingual editions where one of the languages used is English are also eligible.
2. Submitted works will only be used for the purposes of the judging of this Award. All reasonable care will be taken with works submitted but no responsibility is accepted for loss of manuscripts or other material received. Submitted works will be deleted once the judging process is complete and will not be returned.
3. 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 Wheeler Centre's Awards Coordinator at vpla@wheelercentre.com or (03) 9094 7802.
4. 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 is final.
5. Breach of the conditions of entry will render an entry invalid.

Eligibility

1. This Award is offered for an unpublished fiction manuscript which may be a collection of stories or a novel.
2. Only one entry per author will be accepted for this category in any one year.
3. Manuscripts previously entered for this Award, even if substantially reworked, will not be eligible.

4. An 'emerging writer' is defined as an author who has not previously had a full-length work of fiction published in book form. For the purposes of this Award, an author who has been contracted by a publisher as at the closing date for entries – Friday 29 August 2025 – is not eligible to enter this category.
5. The author must be a resident of Victoria for a period and have been living in Victoria for one year up to and including the date of entry.
6. The author must be living at the time of entry.
7. The nominated work must be submitted in the following format:
 - PDF
 - 1.5-spaced or double-spaced
 - Pages must be numbered
 - Please include a title page with your name on it
 - There is no minimum or maximum word limit. Manuscripts should be 'novel length'. As a guide, approximately 35,000 words and above. If you have any questions about your manuscript length, please contact the Awards Coordinator at vpla@wheelercentre.com or (03) 9094 7802.

Authorship

1. The nominated work must be the author's own work.
2. Works may not be entered in the name of a committee.
3. 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.
4. 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.
 - 4.1. It is the responsibility of the nominator to acknowledge joint authorship correctly, where applicable. Please contact the Awards Coordinator at vpla@wheelercentre.com or (03) 9094 7802 to discuss the eligibility of a co-authored book with more than two authors.

Nomination

1. Please complete an entry form to enter the Award.
 - 1.1. Manuscripts will only be accepted in PDF format via the entry form. Hard copies will not be accepted.

2. Works may be submitted by writers or literary agents.

2.1. It is the responsibility of a nominator to ensure and demonstrate that the author's consent is obtained before nominating the work.

3. Nomination forms must be submitted via the entry form on The Wheeler Centre website with the entry attached as a PDF. Nominations must be received by 5pm (AEST) Friday 29 August 2025 to be eligible. Late submissions will not be considered.

Please contact the Awards Coordinator at vpla@wheelercentre.com if you have any questions.

Entry Fee

The cost to enter the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript is \$25, which is to be paid via the entry form on The Wheeler Centre website.

Please contact the Awards Coordinator at vpla@wheelercentre.com or 03 9094 7802 if you are unable to make payment through the online form.

