



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

176 Little Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
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THE WHEELER CENTRE ANNOUNCES 2026 NEXT CHAPTER RECIPIENTS

Thursday 20 November



The Wheeler Centre is delighted to announce the 2026 recipients of The Next Chapter, its flagship writing development program that supports Australia's emerging literary voices. This year's expanded cohort of ten writers represents a dynamic cross-section of contemporary Australian storytelling, spanning genres, geographies and identities.

QUOTE ATTRIBUTABLE TO ERIN VINCENT, WHEELER CENTRE CEO:

'The Next Chapter is Australia's landmark writing development program, discovering fresh voices from underrepresented communities. At a time when literacy rates are in decline across the country, this program is The Wheeler Centre's commitment to developing the next wave of Australian authors and inspiring a love of reading through their work.'

'The Wheeler Centre, together with the support of our generous Next Chapter donors and partners, is proud to champion these voices and help create meaningful pathways for emerging writers to develop their craft and be discovered by readers. The Next Chapter continues to set us apart nationally as an organisation that not only celebrates great writing, but actively invests in its future and in the writers who will shape it.'

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Trading as Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas
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QUOTE ATTRIBUTABLE TO MINISTER FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, COLIN BROOKS MP:

‘For the past 15 years, the Wheeler Centre has been dedicated to uncovering and nurturing Australia’s next generation of literary voices, and this crop of Next Chapter fellows join an impressive alumni list. In particular I congratulate Ledyia Khamou, the first-ever recipient of the John Clarke Fellowship for humour writing — backed by the Victorian Government to honour the life and legacy of John Clarke and his exceptional contribution to the arts.’

Established in 2019, The Next Chapter exists to provide space, time, mentorship and community to writers whose stories are yet to be told – celebrating the diversity of Australian voices and experiences. .

For the first time in 2026, one Next Chapter fellowship will be dedicated to an emerging humour writer through The John Clarke Fellowship, supported by the Victorian Government. The Malcolm Robertson Foundation continues to support a placement for an emerging poet.

The 2026 Next Chapter recipients are:

- Jamil Badi (VIC)
- Lou Garcia-Dolnik (NSW)
- Kathryn Gledhill-Tucker (WA)
- Maya Hodge (VIC)
- Ledyia Khamou (The John Clarke Fellowship) (VIC)
- Simone King (VIC)
- Neika Lehman (VIC)
- Lucy Norton (The Malcolm Robertson Fellowship) (NSW)
- Amanda Tink (NSW)
- Panda Wong (VIC)

Highly Commended:

- Aimee Knight (SA)
- Chloe Mayne (TAS)
- Taonga Sendama (WA)

Hailing from across the continent, each Next Chapter recipient will receive AUD\$15,000 to develop a major writing project over 12 months, supported by a dedicated mentor and a cohort of peers. The program also includes a week-long residency at Varuna, The National Writers’ House, offering fellows the time, guidance and community to bring their stories to life.

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The Wheeler Centre will also collaborate closely with each recipient to help bring their stories to life, providing ongoing career support and creating opportunities for publishers, booksellers and readers to discover and champion their work.

The Next Chapter program is presented by The Wheeler Centre with generous support from the Koshland Innovation Extension Fund, a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation, Creative Australia, the Victorian State Government, the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts.

– ENDS –

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Media centre: Images available [here](#)

For more information on the Next Chapter program, please visit wheelercentre.com/the-next-chapter

The Wheeler Centre is Melbourne's home for smart, passionate and entertaining public talks, and exists to support writers, readers and thinkers. Through live and digital conversations, debates, readings, performances and discussions, it deepens public engagement with the most pressing topics of the day. It is dedicated to creative collaboration, community engagement, diversity, and innovation.

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