



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

176 Little Lonsdale Street
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SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED FOR THE 2026 VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS

Wednesday 10 December

The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards has today unveiled the shortlist of outstanding works vying for one of Australia's richest literary prizes in 2026.

Administered by The Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Victorian Government, the VPLAs' AUD\$292,000 prize pool celebrates excellence in Australian literature across seven main categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Writing for Young Adults, Children's Literature and Indigenous Writing, with an additional prize dedicated to an Unpublished Manuscript.

In a special tribute to the acclaimed writer, teacher and mentor, this year's Writing for Young Adults category will be awarded in honour of John Marsden. The renaming acknowledges Marsden's profound influence on generations of young readers and writers, and his significant contributions in championing the development of Australian young adult literature, education and storytelling.

QUOTE ATTRIBUTABLE TO ERIN VINCENT, CEO, THE WHEELER CENTRE:

'For more than 40 years, the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards have reminded us of the power and possibility of great storytelling. These Awards celebrate literary excellence and more importantly they honour the writers who shape how we understand the world around us. As Melbourne's home for Books, Writing and Ideas, The Wheeler Centre is proud to deliver the VPLAs on behalf of the Victorian Government, as these awards elevate the rich diversity of Australian storytelling.'

QUOTE ATTRIBUTABLE TO MINISTER FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, COLIN BROOKS MP:

'From tales of fantasy to comic relief, powerful poetry to captivating storytelling – this year's shortlist will be a treasure trove for readers of all ages over the summer months. The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards celebrate and showcase the exceptional talent of writers from Victoria and across the country, and diverse stories that make up our cultural fabric. Congratulations to all shortlisted writers.'

This year's shortlisted titles reflect the depth, diversity and innovation of Australia's literary landscape, with the nation's small independent presses as well as First Nations authors being particularly well represented across the selection.

The winners of the Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Indigenous Writing, Children's Literature and Writing for Young Adults categories will each receive \$25,000.

The Award for an Unpublished Manuscript carries \$15,000 in prize money and includes a two-week creative residency at McCraith House in Dromana, delivered in partnership with RMIT Culture and The Wheeler Centre.

All category winners then become contenders for the Victorian Prize for Literature – one of Australia's richest single literary awards, worth an additional \$100,000.

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Meanwhile, voting is now open for the People's Choice Award, with shortlisted and highly commended titles eligible for the \$2,000 prize. Readers across the country are invited to cast their votes via The Wheeler Centre website.

Judges' reports for each category are available [here](#).

Winners will be announced at a special ceremony in Melbourne and live-streamed on The Wheeler Centre website on Wednesday 25 February 2026.

– ENDS –

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Media centre

Shortlisted book cover images and author headshots are available [here](#).

NOTES TO EDITOR

- 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 will be renamed in honour of John Marsden in 2026
- 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 total 2026 VPLAs prize pool is AUD\$292,000
- Winners for all categories will be announced at the Award Ceremony on Wednesday 25 February 2026

2026 VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS SHORTLISTS

Prize for Fiction

A Piece of Red Cloth by Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubb, Leonie Norrington, Djawa Burarrwanga and Djawundil Maymuru (Allen & Unwin)

Cannon by Lee Lai (Giramondo Publishing)

Fierceland by Omar Musa (Penguin Random House Australia)

The Gowkaran Tree in the Middle of Our Kitchen by Azar Shokoofeh (Europa Editions)

The Immigrants: Fabula Mirabilis, or A Wonderful Story by Moreno Giovannoni (Black Inc.)

The Sun was Electric Light by Rachel Morton (University of Queensland Press)

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Prize for Non-Fiction

Ankami by Debra Dank (Echo Publishing)

Conspiracy Nation by Cam Wilson and Ariel Bogle (Ultimo Press)

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

Looking from the North: Australian history from the top down by Henry Reynolds (NewSouth)

The Eagle and the Crow by JM Field (University of Queensland Press)

Prize for Poetry

KONTRA by Eunice Andrada (Giramondo Publishing)

The Rot by Evelyn Araluen (University of Queensland Press)

Two Hundred Million Musketeers by Ender Başkan (Giramondo Publishing)

Prize for Drama

Fly Girl by Genevieve Hegney & Catherine Moore (Ensemble Theatre Company and Lisa Mann Creative Management)

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

The Black Woman of Gippsland by Andrea James (Currency Press & Melbourne Theatre Company)

Prize for Indigenous Writing

The Rot by Evelyn Araluen (University of Queensland Press)

The Eagle & the Crow by JM Field (University of Queensland Press)

The Art of Kaylene Whiskey: Do You Believe in Love edited by Natalie King and Iwantja Arts (Thames & Hudson)

Windows and Mirrors by Djon Mundine (Art Ink)

Prize for Children's Literature

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

Caution! This Book Contains Deadly Reptiles by Corey Tutt and Ben Williams (Allen & Unwin)

Creature Clinic by Gavin Aung Than (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing)

The Wondrous Tale of Lavender Wolfe by Karen Foxlee (Allen & Unwin)

John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults

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

Moonlight & Dust by Jasmin McGaughey (Allen & Unwin)

How to Be Normal by Ange Crawford (Walker Books Australia)

Prize for Unpublished Manuscript

Incognito by Anatolij Lisov

The Final Voyage of Charles Le Corre by William Paine

The Kookaburra by Charlotte Guest

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HIGHLY COMMENDED WORKS

Prize for Fiction

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

Desolation by Hossein Asgari (Ultimo Press)

The Slip by Miriam Webster (Aniko Press)

Prize for Poetry

Fivehundred Swimming Pools by Connor Weightman (Rabbit Poetry)

The Dingo's Noctuary by Judith Nangala Crispin (Puncher and Wattmann)

Prize for Indigenous Writing

A Savage Turn by Luke Patterson (Magabala)

Old Days Imanka nurna laakinha nitjaarta by Marjorie 'Nunga' Williams (Magabala)

Weaving Country by Auntie Kim Wandin and Christine Joy (Walker Books)

Prize for Children's Literature

My Mum is a Bird by Angie Cui (University of Queensland Press)

Spirit of the Crocodile by Aaron Fa'aoso, Lyn White and Michelle Scott Tucker (Allen & Unwin)

Prize for Writing for Young Adults

Weaving Us Together by Lay Maloney (Hachette Australia)

Strange Bedfellows by Ariel Ries (HarperCollins)

Prize for Unpublished Manuscript

Harmony by Ethan Garraway

More Real by Ella Mittas

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