



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

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VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS ANNOUNCE 2025 SHORTLISTS

Tuesday 28 January

The 2025 shortlists for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards (VPLAs) have been revealed, with an outstanding array of talent in contention for one of the country's most lucrative literary prizes. Recognising the best in Australian writing across nine categories, this year's shortlist suite also includes the inaugural John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing, named in honour of the late, great satirist and actor.

Celebrating its 40th year, the VPLAs have long championed both established and emerging creatives from across genres and the nation, with this year's cohort proving no different. From over 700 submissions, 36 writers have been chosen for the 2025 shortlist, with further commendations also shared by the judges. In total, the 2025 awards will gift an expanded prize pool of AUD\$315,000, including the prestigious overarching Victorian Prize for Literature and an additional \$2,000 provided by The Wheeler Centre for the People's Choice Award.

Of this year's shortlist, **Wheeler Centre CEO, Erin Vincent**, said: 'In each genre, these writers and their work cut through and are worthy of celebration. This year's shortlist represents writers at all stages of their careers, from a debut poetry collection to works by some of the country's most acclaimed authors. Readers of all tastes will find their next great read here.'

'This year is a significant one for both the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and The Wheeler Centre, with the VPLAs celebrating 40 years of awards for the most influential writing in Australia and The Wheeler Centre celebrating 15 years of books, writing and ideas.'

Despite their disparate settings and genres, shared themes of grief, morality and reckoning emerged from across the shortlisted titles in Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Award for Indigenous Writing, Children's Literature, Writing for Young Adults and this year's Unpublished Manuscript contenders. Celebrating the unique artistry of comedic writing, the judges for the inaugural John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing – which included John's daughter, writer-director Lorin Clarke – were tickled by both memoir writing and works of fiction.

Established by the Victorian government in 1985 and now administered by The Wheeler Centre, the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards have remained one of the country's most significant arts prizes for four decades. The award's influence and substantial financial prize money has cemented its reputation as a career-defining accolade for Australian writers, fostering literary excellence and supporting the development of creative talent.

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The winners of the Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Award for Indigenous Writing, Children's Literature, Writing for Young Adults and Humour Writing categories are each awarded \$25,000. The winner of the Award for an Unpublished Manuscript receives \$15,000 in prize money and a two-week residency at McCraith House in Dromana, as part of a partnership between The Wheeler Centre and RMIT Culture.

The nine category winners then go on to compete for the country's richest single literary prize, the Victorian Prize for Literature, which awards a further \$100,000 in prize money.

Voting is now open for the People's Choice Award with shortlisted and highly commended titles eligible for the \$2,000 prize. The general public can have their say via the 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 19 March.

– 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 inaugural John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing will be awarded for the first time in 2025
- The total VPLAs prize pool is AUD\$317,000
- Winners for all categories will be announced at the Award Ceremony on Wednesday 19 March

FULL LIST OF CATEGORY SHORTLISTS ON NEXT PAGE

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2025 VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS SHORTLISTS

Prize for Fiction

The Burrow by Melanie Cheng (Text Publishing)
The Echoes by Evie Wyld (Vintage)
Highway 13 by Fiona McFarlane (Allen & Unwin)
Host City by David Owen Kelly (Puncher & Wattmann)
Theory & Practice by Michelle de Kretser (Text Publishing)
Woo Woo by Ella Baxter (Allen & Unwin)

Prize for Non-Fiction

Anything Can Happen by Susan Hampton (Puncher & Wattmann)
A Very Secret Trade by Cassandra Pybus (Allen & Unwin)
The Lasting Harm: Witnessing the Trial of Ghislaine Maxwell by Lucia Osborne-Crowley (Allen & Unwin)
~~Monument~~ by Bonny Cassidy (Giramondo Publishing)
Näku Dhäruk The Bark Petitions: How the People of Yirrkala Changed the Course of Australian Democracy by Clare Wright (Text Publishing)

Prize for Poetry

Gawimarra: Gathering by Jeanine Leane (University of Queensland Press)
Holocene Pointbreaks by Jake Goetz (Puncher & Wattmann)
rock flight by Hasib Hourani (Giramondo Publishing)

Prize for Drama

37 by Nathan Maynard (Currency Press & Melbourne Theatre Company. *37* was commissioned and developed through Melbourne Theatre Company's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program and co-produced by Melbourne Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre)
Frame Narrative by Emily Sheehan (Produced by New Ghosts Theatre Company and staged at The Old Fitz Theatre)
Into the Shimmering World by Angus Cerini (Developed with and staged by Sydney Theatre Company)

Prize for Indigenous Writing

Afloat by Kirli Saunders (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing)
Black Witness by Amy McQuire (University of Queensland Press)
I'm Not Really Here by Gary Lonesborough (Allen & Unwin)
Refugia by Eflie Shiosaki (Magabala Books)



Prize for Children's Literature

The 113th Assistant Librarian by Stuart Wilson (Penguin Random House Australia)

Listen, Hippo! by Gabriel Evans (Penguin Random House Australia)

The Midwatch by Judith Rossell (Hardie Grant Children's Publishing)

Three Dresses by Wanda Gibson (University of Queensland Press)

Prize for Writing for Young Adults

Anomaly by Emma Lord (Affirm Press)

Liar's Test by Ambelin Kwaymullina (Text Publishing)

Smoke & Mirrors by Barry Jonsberg (Allen & Unwin)

John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing

Detachable Penis: a Queer Legal Saga by Sam Elkin (Upswell Publishing)

Ghost Cities by Siang Lu (University of Queensland Press)

I'd Rather Not by Robert Skinner (Black Inc.)

The Medusa Situation by Gabiann Marin (Clan Destine Press)

My Brother's Ashes Are in a Sandwich Bag by Michelle Brasier (Ultimo Press)

Prize for Unpublished Manuscript

Every Stolen Moment by Lauren Williams

Heavy Petting by Kat Capel

I Made This Just for You by Chris Ames

HIGHLY COMMENDED WORKS

Prize for Non-Fiction

Cactus Pear for My Beloved by Samah Sabawi (Penguin Random House Australia)

Peripathetic: Notes On (un)belonging by Cher Tan (NewSouth Publishing)

Prize for Poetry

G-d, Sleep, and Chaos by Alan Fyfe (Gazebo Books / Life Before Man)

Naag Mountain by Manisha Anjali (Giramondo Publishing)

Prize for Indigenous Writing

Always Will Be by Mykaela Saunders (University of Queensland Press)

Makarra by Barrina South (Recent Work Press)

This Is Where You Have To Go by Lynda Holden (Pantera Press)

Prize for Children's Literature

How to Free a Jinn by Raidah Shah Idil (Allen & Unwin)

Squishbook: Make comics with Squishface Studio and friends! Edited by David

Blumenstein, containing work by numerous cartoonists and Kensington Primary School



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students (Squishface Studios)

Prize for Writing for Young Adults

One by One They Disappear by Mike Lucas (Penguin Random House Australia)

The Skin I'm In by Steph Tisdell (Pan Macmillan Australia)

Prize for Unpublished Manuscript

Nina and Pearl by Fleur Glenn

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