

2021 Queensland Literary Awards winners announced

A book reclaiming the history of how Aboriginal workers were once paid in opium has won the richest prize at the 2021 Queensland Literary Awards this evening.

Renowned visual artist Dr Fiona Foley was awarded the \$25,000 Queensland Premier's Award for a work of State Significance for her book *Biting the Clouds: A Badtjala perspective on the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* (University of Queensland Press) at a ceremony at State Library.

Judges praised her “original and creative exploration ... of the devastation wrought upon Queensland’s Badtjala people at the end of the 19th century”.

“The little-known story of how Badtjala workers were paid in opium is inventively told in dialogue between her art and text, reclaiming the story for her own people and for the wider Australian community,” the judges said.

Dr Foley was also State Library’s inaugural 2020 Monica Clare Research Fellow.

Award winners took home a total of \$238,500 in prize money across 11 categories that include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children’s, young adult fiction, short story, and unpublished work.

The University of Queensland Fiction Book Award was won by Nardi Simpson for *Song of the Crocodile* (Hachette Australia). The manuscript for this debut novel is a wonderful outcome from a 2018 black&write! Fellowship with State Library.

The University of Queensland Non-Fiction Book Award was won by Luke Stegemann for *Amnesia Road: Landscape, violence and memory* (NewSouth Publishing).

Bindi by Kirli Saunders and illustrated by Dub Leffler (Magabala Books) secured the Children’s Book Award and this beautiful story of childhood innocence, family, community, and hope has won awards and been short and long listed around the country.

And this year’s Queensland Premier’s Young Publishers and Writers Awards went to Allannah Hunt and Ellen Wengert.

The Courier-Mail People’s Choice Queensland Book of the Year Award, which was open to public voting, was awarded to *Mary’s Last Dance: The untold story of the wife of Mao’s Last Dancer* by Mary Li (Penguin Random House).

State Library of Queensland proudly manages the awards in collaboration with sponsors, industry partners and the writing community.

See full list below

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and **Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch** congratulated Badtjala author and artist Dr Fiona Foley and other 2021 winners of the Queensland Literary Awards, who were announced at tonight's award ceremony.

"These awards highlight the exceptional work from home grown talent being produced and my congratulations goes out to all of tonight's winners," the Premier said.

The Premier commended Dr Fiona Foley, who took out the \$25,000 Queensland Premier's Award for a work of State Significance for *Biting the Clouds: A Badtjala perspective on the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* (University of Queensland Press).

"Dr Foley's prize-winning book, *Biting the Clouds* puts a spotlight on a terrible part of Queensland's history when Aboriginal workers were paid their wages in opium," the Premier said.

"This significant truth telling account will play an important role in building a more inclusive and respectful future for Queensland."

The Premier also congratulated Allanah Hunt and Ellen Wengert as the winners of the two Queensland Premier's Young Publishers and Writers Awards with a total prize value of \$12,500 each.

"Allanah will continue to build on her already successful career as a writer who is not afraid to delve into Australia's past and present and to tell her stories with truth and a strong voice.

"Ellen Wengert, who has had works published in *The Guardian*, *ABC*, *Griffith Review*, *Kill Your Darlings*, will continue to give insights to familiar places and the tangled politics of everyday life.

"The Queensland Literary Awards recognises important Queensland and national voices and each year these awards honour diversity in Australian writing, nurture new talent and celebrate Queensland stories."

Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch also acknowledged Dr Fiona as a worthy winner for telling this compelling story of First Nations people through a combination of visual art, cultural truths and history.

Tabitha Bird of Boonah, Ella Jeffrey of Alderley and Kali Napier of Sherwood are also to be congratulated as the three recipients of the Queensland Writers Fellowships for 2021," Minister Enoch said.

"It is so exciting to see three local authors given the opportunity to immerse themselves in new projects and advance their careers through these fellowships.

"The Queensland Writers Fellowships provide a cash award of \$15,000, along with professional development support to the value of \$4,500.

Last year the Palaszczuk Government released Creative Together 2020-2030: A 10-Year Roadmap for arts, culture and creativity, and the Queensland Literary Awards supports several of the roadmap's priorities, including to share our stories and celebrate our storytellers.

Minister Enoch said the Government's investment in the State Library of Queensland supports literacy and encourages creativity in partnership with communities across the state, and this initiative helps support the careers of Queensland artists.

“The arts, cultural and creative sectors are key to delivering our plan for economic recovery from COVID-19, each year injecting \$8.5 billion into the state’s economy and supporting more than 92,000 jobs for Queenslanders,” Ms Enoch said.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“The transportive power of a beautifully written book cannot be underestimated in times of uncertainty.”

“We hope this year’s finalists and winners inspire readers to expand their view of the world through wonderful storytelling.”

“State Library has managed the awards in collaboration with sponsors, donors, and the literary community since 2014 and we are proud to continue nurturing and championing the careers of all Queensland writers, from emerging to established.”

“I congratulate all the winners and finalists; your work and dedication enriches the lives of readers everywhere.”

“These awards would not be possible without the support of our partners – the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, The University of Queensland, Griffith University, the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund, University of Southern Queensland, *The Courier-Mail*, Jenny Summerson, and Susan Hocking and Ian Mackie, and their family, of the Hocking Mackie Fund at APS Foundation.”

2021 Queensland Literary Awards winners

Queensland Premier's Award for a work of State Significance

Awarded to an outstanding work, by an Australian writer, focused on documenting, discussing or highlighting a uniquely Queensland story.

Prize: \$25,000

- *Biting the Clouds: A Badtjala perspective on the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* by Fiona Foley (University of Queensland Press)

Queensland Writers Fellowships

Awarded to three (3) established Queensland authors to advance a writing project over a 12-month period. There was no shortlist for this prize.

Prize: three Fellowships of \$15,000 each, plus professional development support to the value of \$4,500

- Tabitha Bird for ‘The Healing Giggle of Wonder’
- Ella Jeffery for ‘Split Level’
- Kali Napier for ‘Preserving: Stories’

Queensland Premier's Young Publishers and Writers Awards

Awarded to two (2) outstanding Queensland writers up to 30 years of age.

Prize: two awards of \$10,000 plus career development support to the value of \$2,500 each

- Allanah Hunt
- Ellen Wengert

The University of Queensland Fiction Book Award

Awarded to an outstanding work of fiction by an Australian writer.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Song of the Crocodile* by Nardi Simpson (Hachette Australia)

The University of Queensland Non-Fiction Book Award

Awarded to an outstanding work of non-fiction by an Australian writer.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Amnesia Road: Landscape, violence and memory* by Luke Stegemann (NewSouth Publishing)

Children's Book Award

Awarded to a work, suitable for children up to 12 years old, by an Australian writer.

This award is supported by Susan Hocking and Ian Mackie, and their family, through the Hocking Mackie Trust at APS Foundation.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Bindi* written by Kirli Saunders and illustrated by Dub Leffler (Magabala Books)

Griffith University Young Adult Book Award

Awarded to a work, suitable for young adults aged 13 to 19, by an Australian writer.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Metal Fish, Falling Snow* by Cath Moore (Text Publishing)

University of Southern Queensland Steele Rudd Award for a Short Story Collection

Awarded to an outstanding collection of short stories by an Australian writer.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Ordinary Matter* by Laura Elvery (University of Queensland Press)

Judith Wright Calanthe Award for a Poetry Collection

Awarded to an outstanding collection of poetry by an Australian writer.

This award is supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Terminally Poetic* by Ouyang Yu (Ginninderra Press)

David Unaipon Award for an Emerging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Writer

Awarded for an outstanding manuscript by an unpublished Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writer.

This award is supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Prize: \$15,000, plus manuscript development and publication with University of Queensland Press

- Ngankiburka-mekauwe (Senior Woman of Water) Georgina Williams for 'Mekauwe=Tears Volume #1 Poems (Notes For Song) 1970-2020'

Glendower Award for an Emerging Queensland Writer

Awarded for an outstanding manuscript by an unpublished Queensland writer.

This award is supported by Jenny Summerson through the Queensland Library Foundation.

Prize: \$15,000, plus manuscript development and publication with University of Queensland Press

- Siang Lu, 'The Whitewash'

The Courier-Mail People's Choice Queensland Book of the Year Award

Awarded to an outstanding book by a Queensland author, taken from eligible books entered in the Fiction and Non-Fiction categories. The winner of this award was determined by public vote.

Prize: \$10,000

- *Mary's Last Dance: The untold story of the wife of Mao's Last Dancer* by Mary Li (Penguin Random House)

For more information: [Queensland Literary Awards](#)