

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Poets win black&write! Fellowships

Two First Nations poets have won State Library of Queensland's prestigious black&write! Fellowships.

It is the first time both fellowships have been awarded to poets.

Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi from Acacia Ridge in Queensland and Lulu Houdini from Shoalhaven, NSW will each receive \$15,000 in prize money, editorial manuscript development with State Library and a publication opportunity with Hachette Australia.

Meleika's winning entry, 'To Clear Your Throat of Fish', is a powerful political and personal poetry collection that examines themes of nature, displacement and connection to Country.

The Torres Strait Islander writer expresses their love of the islands and their family, as well as providing guidance to young Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland.

The judges said, "With fire and ferocity, the poet beautifully encapsulates the spirit of the islands."

Gamilaroi poet Lulu Houdini's poetry collection titled 'mai-lai' is "a living archive of Gamilaroi poet Lulu Houdini's journey, forward and backward, through identity, exploration, fizz and raw energy."

According to the judges, "This is a poetry collection that is transformational and experimental in form, genre and intent."

"Houdini's writing shows great care for all things that she reflects and relates to."

The fellowship program, which has produced 17 new published books, has been introducing exciting new First Nations writers to the Australian and international literary scenes since 2011. Former winners include Sue McPherson, Jared Thomas, Nardi Simpson and Claire G. Coleman.

The black&write! Fellowships are open to all writers (published and unpublished) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent currently living in Australia. The fellowships are open to adult fiction, young adult fiction, short story collection, poetry collection and children's book manuscripts.

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leanne Enoch:

"For more than a decade, black&write! Fellowships have created opportunities for First Nations writers and storytellers to publish creative works, inspire new audiences and grow their careers.

"Congratulations to both poets on their fellowships and public recognition of their commitment to excellence in engaging First Nations storytelling.

"The Queensland Government's investment in the State Library of Queensland delivers on our 10-year Creative Together strategy to elevate First Nations arts, culture and storytellers on the global stage ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games."

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

"Congratulations to 2024 black&write! winners Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi and Lulu Houdini.

“Meleika and Lulu have become part of a trailblazing program that continues to rise in prominence and influence in the publishing world.

“Their work will help inspire other First Nations poets and writers to share their stories.”

Quote from black&write! Fellowship winner Lulu Houdini:

“I’m grateful for this opportunity to be part of the black&write! program.

“It means the world to me and my family— those living and those passed.”

Quote from black&write! Fellowship winner Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi:

“It’s a great opportunity as a Torres Strait Islander and Tongan poet.

“I am so excited to know if my work was published my people and family would be shared with the world.”

black&write! is supported by the Australian Government, through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, the Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund and Fellowships publishing partner Hachette Australia.

More information: [black&write!](#) | [Media kit](#) | media@slq.qld.gov.au | (07) 3840 7897



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Interviews and images are available upon request.