

2021 black&write! Fellowship winners announced

A reclusive wombat and poems about land, memory, love, and art have helped secure black&write! Fellowships for two emerging Aboriginal writers.

The 2021 winners were announced by State Library of Queensland at a special online ceremony today.

Queenslander Tyliisa Elisara and Victorian Susie Anderson were each awarded \$10,000 fellowships.

Tyliisa is a social worker who lives on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji land in Cairns with her husband and young family.

She descends from the Narungga, Kurna and Adyamathanha people of South Australia and was born and raised on Mamu country in Innisfail, Queensland – a heritage, alongside her Irish ancestry, with a long legacy of storytelling and resilience in the face of adversity.

Her manuscript 'Wurtoo' is a fun adventure story about a reclusive wombat who is in love with the sky.

Inspired by classic children's books such as *Winnie the Pooh* and *Fantastic Mr Fox*, Wurtoo goes on a journey to reach the sky, making friends with other Australian animals along the way. The story is funny and quirky with timely environmental themes.

The second winner, Susie Anderson, is a Wergaia/Wemba Wemba woman from Melbourne, who uses words to repair connections between people and place.

Descended from the Wergaia and Wemba Wemba people of western Victoria she currently lives on Boon Wurrung land in Melbourne.

Susie won the fellowship for her stunning poetry collection 'the body country', which explores land, memory, love, and art. These universal themes are played with, and connected by, meditative asides threading through the different sections. The words used in 'Chorus' are from the Wergaia language of north west Victoria.

The winners will receive prize money, manuscript development with State Library's black&write! editors and publication opportunity with Hachette Australia.

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 Fellowships are open to all writers (published and unpublished) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent currently living in Australia.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.

black&write! is supported by the Australian Government, through the Australia Council for the Arts, publishing partner Hachette Australia, the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund and The Lionel & Yvonne Spencer Trust.

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch:

“Congratulations to this year’s two winning writers, Tylissa Elisara and Susie Anderson, whose work will make an important contribution to contemporary First Nations writing.

“The Palaszczuk Government supports State Library of Queensland to cultivate and share our state’s cultural stories, which is an important part of our journey towards truth-telling and recognition of the past.

“Language, words and stories are so important in helping us to form connections with each other, and that is what this program is all about.”

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“When black&write! began 10 years ago, it was a game changer in the Australian literary landscape, providing much-needed pathways to publication for First Nations authors and illustrators.

“Over the last decade 21 authors and illustrators have been named Fellows, with many going on to establish distinguished literary careers.

“Past Fellows include Ali Cobby Eckermann, Sue McPherson, Jared Thomas and Alison Whittaker.”

Quotes from 2021 black&write! Fellow, Tylissa Elisara:

“To be validated for my writing, and to perceive it as a potential career was just mind-blowing. I still don’t think I’ve fully processed it all. I started writing this book for (my son) – just for fun until I stumbled upon the competition – and it was him that encouraged me to take it somewhere. So, to be able to justify his faith in me and prove to him that he can achieve literally anything he sets his mind to, was probably the biggest reward of all. I am just so grateful for this amazing opportunity; it really is beyond words.”

Quotes from 2021 black&write! Fellow, Susie Anderson:

“There’s still work to be done, but I feel that this reworked collection with its old and new pieces shows the breadth of my writing and uses different voices and characters to reflect on themes of place, culture, memory, loss and love. I feel really proud that I gave the work time to get to this place and that I didn’t give up on them.”

More information: slq.qld.gov.au/get-involved/fellowships-awards-residencies/blackwrite

Media kit: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/lqEhDwN53s>