

Media Release

The Hon Danny Pearson MP
Assistant Treasurer
Minister for Regulatory Reform
Minister for Government Services
Minister for Creative Industries



Monday, 1 February 2021

VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS – WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The debut novel by Victorian writer Laura Jean McKay has taken out Australia's richest literary prize at the 2021 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Minister for Creative Industries Danny Pearson tonight named McKay the winner of the Victorian Prize for Literature in a virtual ceremony that awarded \$267,000 in prizes to Australian writers across seven categories.

In addition to receiving the major prize, McKay's *The Animals in That Country* – which takes place amid a pandemic that causes victims to hear the voices of animals – also received the Prize for Fiction.

Legendary Gunditjmara and Bundjalung musician Archie Roach won the Prize for Indigenous Writing for his memoir *Tell Me Why: The Story of My Life and My Music*. Angus Cerini received the Prize for Drama for *Wonnangatta*, which premiered in September 2020, marking Sydney Theatre Company's return to the stage.

Journalist Paddy Manning was named winner of the Prize for Non-Fiction for his climate change investigation *Body Count: How Climate Change is Killing Us* and the Prize for Poetry was awarded to David Stavanger for *Case Notes*, a body of work that documents the mental health experience.

Cath Moore's *Metal Fish, Falling Snow*, which explores a girl's search for identity and her struggle to deal with grief, was awarded the Prize for Writing for Young Adults and the Prize for an Unpublished Manuscript went to André Dao for his genre defying novel, *Anam*.

Dao's novel, which explores intergenerational memory and family legacy, joins a prestigious list of writers and works of fiction that have been discovered through the Unpublished Manuscript Prize, including: Jane Harper's *The Dry*, Graeme Simsion's *The Rosie Project*, and Maxine Beneba Clarke's short story collection *Foreign Soil*.

The \$2,000 People's Choice Award went to Louise Milligan for *Witness: An Investigation into the Brutal Cost of Seeking Justice*, an account of courageous people who have come forward and faced their abusers in high-profile child abuse and sexual assault cases.

The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards were established in 1985 to celebrate and honour Australian writing and writers. The Awards are administered by the Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Victorian Government.

Winners in the Fiction, Non-Fiction, Indigenous Writing, Poetry, Young Adult and Drama categories receive \$25,000 with the Unpublished Manuscript winner receiving \$15,000. The Victorian Prize for Literature, awarded to the most outstanding work across all categories, receives a further \$100,000.

For more information, visit wheelercentre.com.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Creative Industries Danny Pearson

"Books and writing have always been important, but in the past 12 months they were a life-line – keeping us entertained, informed, inspired and connected."

"Congratulations to this year's winners and nominees, for bringing your voice, imagination and perspective to readers across the globe this past year."

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2021 VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS - WINNERS

Winner of the Prize for Fiction:

The Animals in That Country by Laura Jean McKay (Victoria, Scribe Publications)

Winner of the Prize for Non-Fiction:

Body Count: How Climate Change is Killing Us by Paddy Manning (NSW, Simon & Schuster Australia)

Winner of the Prize for Drama:

Wonnangatta by Angus Cerini (Victoria, Sydney Theatre Company)

Winner of the Prize for Poetry:

Case Notes by David Stavanger (NSW, UWA Publishing)

Winner of the Prize for Young Adult Writing:

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

Winner of the Unpublished Manuscript Award:

Anam by André Dao (Victoria)

Winner of the Prize for Indigenous Writing:

Tell Me Why: The Story of My Life and My Music by Archie Roach (Victoria, Simon & Schuster Australia)

Winner of the People's Choice Award

Witness: An Investigation into the Brutal Cost of Seeking Justice by Louise Milligan (Victoria, Hachette Australia)