

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, 15 September 2021

Challenging times provide outstanding shortlist in sought-after Melbourne Prize for Literature 2021 & Awards

- Eight finalists announced today
- Public voting opens at www.melbourneprize.org for the \$3,000 Civic Choice Award 2021
- Over \$98,000 prize pool available

Some of Victoria's best-known authors make up the list of finalists in one of the most sought-after and valuable literature prizes in our community.

The \$60,000 Melbourne Prize for Literature finalists are:

Jordie Albiston Maxine Beneba-Clarke Pi O Christos Tsiolkas

Finalists in the \$15,000 Writer's Prize are:

Vivian Blaxell Eloise Victoria Grills David Sornig Ouyang Yu

JUDGE'S STATEMENT. The shortlist for the Melbourne Prize for Literature 2021 has made an invaluable contribution to Australian literature and to our cultural life. The shortlist for the Writer's Prize 2021 spoke to the times in which we live, adopting a variety of methods and perspectives; each stood out for their considered approach to the essays and the energy of their writing. Despite the challenging era we are living through, an unprecedented response was received this year across all categories and the judges would especially like to thank all entrants.

Finalists will receive \$1,000, which is generously supported by [Fed Square](#).

Judges this year include three leading literary identities: **Declan Fry**, Writer, **Alice Pung**, Writer and **Michael Williams**, Artistic Director, Sydney Writers Festival.

During this challenging year an overwhelming number of Victorian authors stepped up to enter everything from life-time bodies of work to proposals for new work and essays, across the categories on offer.

The inspiring response reinforces Melbourne's designation as a [UNESCO City of Literature](#) and an incredibly lively literary sector.

The Awards this year will be broadcast online at www.melbourneprize.org at 6pm on November 10.

Now in its 17th year, the annual [Melbourne Prize](#) continues to provide opportunities to Victorian musicians, writers and (urban) sculptors over its three-year prize cycle. The importance of providing opportunities to the creative sector, this year to writers, has never been clearer.

The three categories on offer this year are as follows:

The **\$60,000 Melbourne Prize for Literature 2021** will be awarded to a Victorian author whose body of published work has made an outstanding contribution to Australian literature and to cultural and intellectual life. The author's work may include all literary genres for example, fiction, non-fiction, essays, plays, screenplays and poetry. **The Prize is supported by Major Partner, The Vera Moore Foundation.**

The **NEW \$20,000 Professional Development Award 2021** will be awarded to a Victorian published author to fund a project/s, travel or other proposal that will assist them to pursue their writing career. **There are no finalists in the category – the winner will be announced on November 10. The Award is supported by the [Melbourne Prize Trust](#).**

The **\$15,000 Writer's Prize 2021** will be awarded to a Victorian writer and author of an essay of 10,000 words maximum, which has outstanding originality, literary merit and creative freshness. **The Award is supported by its sole patron [The Robert Salzer Foundation](#).**

Public voting in the **\$3,000 Civic Choice Award 2021, supported by [Readings](#) and [Hardie Grant Books](#)** opens today at www.melbourneprize.org – voters have a chance to win a \$100 Readings Gift Voucher and can vote for the finalists in both the Melbourne Prize for Literature and The Writer's Prize 2021.

Melbourne Prize Trust Executive Director, Mr Simon Warrender, said: "I am thrilled to see the response this year and to be able to provide opportunities to local authors to be both recognised for their body of work and importantly assisted to produce new work with the categories on offer."

"I remain immensely grateful for the generosity of all our 2021 partners and the time and experience of our team of judges, who I know had a challenging task in making the selection.

"We are fortunate to have a thriving literary community in Victoria and Melbourne as a UNESCO City of Literature. Our creative industries have never been under such pressure and we hope that, through our activities this year, we can make a difference," Mr Warrender added.

Announcement of finalists	15 September 2021
Public voting opens for Civic Choice Award 2021	15 September 2021
Announcement of winners at www.melbourneprize.org	10 November 2021
Announcement of Civic Choice Award 2020 winner	11 November 2021

The Melbourne Prize for Literature 2021 and Awards are made possible through the generous support of the many partners and patrons. Many of the partners and patrons have supported the Prize since inception in 2005. Please see a full partner list below.

The Vera Moore Foundation is acknowledged and thanked for their outstanding support as a major patron and sole patron of the Melbourne Prize for Literature 2021. Thank you to patrons, Diana Gibson AO and [The Tallis Foundation](#) and the [Sofitel Melbourne On Collins](#) as our Corporate Partner.

The visual identity and design for this year's Prize is the creation of leading Melbourne design studio [PLAYGROUND](#).

The Melbourne Prize Trust is proud to have [Kutcha Edwards](#) as its Cultural Advisor.

[Fed Square](#) is the Events partner and 'home' of the Melbourne Prize. The Melbourne Prize Trust appreciates Fed Square's generous support from inception of the annual Melbourne Prize.

The Melbourne Prize Trust is proud to have the **Victorian Government**, through [Creative Victoria](#) and the [City of Melbourne Awards - Arts Excellence Program](#), as Government Partners.

– Ends –

For more information or for interview opportunities call [Adi Stevens](#) at [RoyceComm](#) on 0407 411 088, or visit www.melbourneprize.org.

[Progress of the Prize can be followed via our social media platforms:](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/MelbournePrize>
https://twitter.com/Melbourne_Prize

Notes to the editor:

Launched in 2004, the [Melbourne Prize Trust](#) was established to recognise and reward talent, excellence and inspire creative development. The Trust achieves this aim by running the annual Melbourne Prize, which is funded by a collaboration of partners and patrons. The Melbourne Prize Trust and annual Melbourne Prize were founded by Executive Director, Simon Warrender. [Committee for Melbourne](#) is a founding supporter.

Now in its 17th year and being one of the most valuable arts prizes of its kind in Australia, the annual Melbourne Prize operates in a three-year cycle, including the Melbourne Prize for Urban Sculpture (2020), the Melbourne Prize for Literature (2021) and the Melbourne Prize for Music (2022).

Since inception, the annual Melbourne Prize has made available more than \$1.8 million in prizes and award, artist residencies, equipment grants and an annual public exhibition at Federation Square to Victorian writers, sculptors and musicians.

The origins of the Melbourne Prize Trust date back to *The Magic Pudding* sculpture commission, as part of a children's garden concept, at the [Royal Botanic Garden Melbourne](#) – an initiative of Simon Warrender implemented in 1998 through Committee for Melbourne's Future Focus Group. Miniatures of this sculpture are available for purchase through the Melbourne Prize Trust; a Deductible Gift Recipient and Income Tax Exempt Charity.

All announcement and information will be available at www.melbourneprize.org

Past recipients of the Melbourne Prize for Literature

2018 – Alison Lester
2015 - Prof. Chris Wallace-Crabbe AM
2012 - Alex Miller
2009 - Gerald Murnane
2006 - Helen Garner

Past recipients of the Best Writing Award

2018– Maria Turmakin, *Axiomatic* (Penguin, 2021)
2015 - Andrea Goldsmith, *Memory Trap* (4th Estate, 2013)
2012 - Craig Sherborne, *The Amateur Science of Love* (Text, 2011)
2009 - Nam Le, *The Boat* (Penguin, 2008)
2006 - Christos Tsiolkas, *Dead Europe* (Random House, 2006)

Past recipients Readings Residency Award

2018 - Jamie Marie Lau

Past recipients of the Civic Choice Award

2018 - Louise Milligan, *Cardinal* (MUP, 2017)
2015 - Robyn Annear, *Place Without Poetry* (Essay, 2015)
2012 - Tony Birch, *Blood* (UQP, 2011)
2009 - Amra Pajalic, *The Good Daughter* (Text, 2009)
2006 - Henry von Doussa, *The Park Bench* (Thompson Walker, 2006)

Past recipient The Writer's Prize 2015

2015 – Kate Ryan, *Psychotherapy for Normal People* (2015)

Thank you to our 2021 partners and patrons

Government Partners	Major Patron	Melbourne Prize for Literature 2021 Partner	The Writers Prize 2021 Sole Patron	Civic Choice 2021 Partners
 	 vera moore FOUNDATION	 vera moore FOUNDATION	 THE ROBERT SALZER FOUNDATION	  Hardie Grant BOOKS
Founding Partners	Patrons	Event Partner and Finalist Fees	Corporate Partner	Professional Development Award 2021 Partner
  Building a better working world 	Diana Gibson AO  BELEURA HOUSE & GARDEN MORNINGTON	 Creative Partner 	 Corporate Partner 	 Professional Development Award 2021 Partner  
Professional Services	Signage & AV	IT Services and Website	Banners	Trophies
	 architectural & environmental signage 	 	 	

Design by PLAYGROUND
 Committee for Melbourne a founding supporter