

Embargo 9pm, 26 September 2025

***Black Witness* wins prestigious Queensland literary award**

A rigorous interrogation of some of Australia's most troubling criminal cases involving Indigenous people has won the top prize at the 2025 Queensland Literary Awards announced tonight.

Journalist and researcher Dr. Amy McQuire has won the \$30,000 Queensland Premier's Award for a Work of State Significance for *Black Witness* (University of Queensland Press).

Award judges said *Black Witness* was a work of outstanding scholarly rigour and moral clarity.

"Grounded in meticulous evidence, it offers a powerful indictment of systemic injustice and underscores the need for truth-telling. This is a vital contribution to Indigenous scholarship and the national reckoning we so urgently need," the judges said.

A prize pool totalling \$261,000 was awarded across 11 categories including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and published and unpublished work.

The \$15,000 The University of Queensland Fiction Book Award was won by Emily Maguire for *Rapture* (Allen & Unwin), a reimagination of a young woman in ninth-century Europe that judges described as "a vivid tale of adventure and risk, written with the compelling, page-turning wonder of a high-stakes thriller".

Poet Chris Andrews was awarded the \$17,500 Judith Wright Calanthe Award for his "observational but deeply complex" collection *The Oblong Plot* (Puncher & Wattmann), which Andrews colourfully describes as the result of "years of pfaftering around".

Since 2014 State Library of Queensland has managed the awards on behalf of the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, in collaboration with sponsors, industry partners and the writing community.

The awards are assessed by panels of independent judges which include authors, critics, academics, publishers, media professionals, editors, librarians, reviewers, teachers, arts organisation representatives and booksellers.

Quotes from Minister for Education and the Arts John-Paul Langbroek:

“The Queensland Government supports the Queensland Literary Awards to celebrate and showcase the creative talent and exceptional work of our state’s storytellers, poets and writers.

“Congratulations to Dr Amy McQuire on winning the Queensland Premier's Award for a Work of State Significance, and to Alex Philp and Sean West, who have each won a Queensland Premier’s Young Publishers and Writers Award.

“Another two talented Queensland authors, Vuong Pham and Mykaela Saunders, are to be commended for receiving Queensland Writers Fellowships to advance their writing projects and develop their careers.

“Queensland’s literary sector is part of a vibrant statewide arts and cultural scene, which will play a pivotal role in sharing our unique stories with the world in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond.”

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“The Queensland Literary Awards celebrate the work of storytellers whose passion and commitment to writing enriches the lives of readers throughout the world.

“The winners of this year’s awards provide us with the opportunity to wrestle with big ideas that provoke and inspire, reminding us of the power of literature to spark debate and connect people of different perspectives.

“Congratulations to all this year’s winners, who are now part of a long and distinguished history of writing and storytelling in Queensland that stretches back millennia.”

2025 Queensland Literary Awards winners

Queensland Premier's Award for a Work of State Significance

Awarded to an outstanding work by a Queensland author or an outstanding work by an Australian writer that tells a Queensland story. Supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Prize: \$30,000

- *Black Witness* by Amy McQuire (University of Queensland Press)

Queensland Premier’s Young Publishers and Writers Awards

Awarded to 2 outstanding Queensland writers and/or publishers up to 30 years of age. Supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Prize: 2 awards of \$12,000 plus career development support to the value of \$3,000 each.

- Alex Philp
- Sean West

The University of Queensland Fiction Book Award

Awarded to an outstanding work of fiction for adults by an Australian writer. Sponsored by The University of Queensland.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Rapture* by Emily Maguire (Allen & Unwin)

The University of Queensland Non-Fiction Book Award

Awarded to an outstanding work of non-fiction for adults by an Australian writer. Sponsored by The University of Queensland.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Näku Dhäruk The Bark Petitions: How the People of Yirrkala Changed the Course of Australian Democracy* by Clare Wright (Text Publishing)

Children's Book Award

Awarded to an outstanding work by an Australian writer suitable for children up to 12 years of age. Supported by the Queensland Library Foundation.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Little Bones* by Sandy Bigna (University of Queensland Press)

Young Adult Book Award

Awarded to an outstanding work by an Australian writer suitable for young adults 13 to 19 years of age. Supported by Susan Hocking and Ian Mackie, and their family.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Don't Let the Forest In* by CG Drews (Hachette Australia)

Judith Wright Calanthe Award for a Poetry Collection

Awarded to an outstanding published collection of poetry by an Australian writer. Supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Prize: \$17,500

- *The Oblong Plot* by Chris Andrews (Puncher & Wattmann)

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

Awarded for an outstanding unpublished manuscript by an emerging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writer. Supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Prize: \$20,000, plus publication with University of Queensland Press

- "Finding Billy Brown" by E.M. Crismani

Glendower Award for an Emerging Queensland Writer

Awarded for an outstanding unpublished manuscript by an emerging Queensland writer. Supported by Jenny Summerson through the Queensland Library Foundation.

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

- “Commonplaces” by Gillian Hagenus

***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 *The Courier-Mail* People's Choice Queensland Book of the Year Award is determined by public vote. Sponsored by *The Courier-Mail*.

Prize: \$15,000

- *Nightingale* by Laura Elvery (University of Queensland Press)

Queensland Writers Fellowships

Awarded to 2 Queensland authors to advance a writing project over a 12-month period. Supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and State Library of Queensland.

Prize: 2 Fellowships of \$20,000 each, plus professional development support to the value of \$4,500

- Vuong Pham for “Reborn”
- Mykaela Saunders for “Dear Uncle”

Media kit: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/xnep2WNi5>

Website: <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/get-involved/awards-and-fellowships/queensland-literary-awards>

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