

2004 NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

conducted by the Fellowship of Australian Writers (Victoria)

RESULTS

PART 1: BOOK AWARDS

FAW MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING AWARD – in its thirty-second year, an award for a non-fiction book first published in Australia, of sustained quality and distinction with an Australian theme. Sponsored by **Melbourne University Press**

Winner (\$1000) Roland Perry *Monash: The Outsider Who Won a War* (Random House)

Highly Commended: Scott Bevan *Battle Lines: Australian Artists at War* (Random House)
Tanja Luckins *The Gates of Memory* (Curtin University Books)

Judges' report: Jean Thornton and Bill Anderson

The standard of entries was high this year. Although it was fairly difficult to decide on the final selection, the judges found they were able to agree on the winner and the commendations. Roland Perry's biography of Sir John Monash was judged the outstanding book entered in this award. It has long been thought that Geoffrey Serle's magisterial biography published in 1982 precluded the need for another full-scale biography of Monash, but in Perry's splendid biography he has not only added greatly to our knowledge of Monash, he has produced a finely written, engrossing book. This biography is not only very detailed and painstakingly researched, it is also a wonderfully entertaining book. *Monash: The Outsider Who Won A War* is a model of the biographer's art and a worthy winner.

Scott Bevan's biographically structured work *Battle Lines: Australian Artists At War* is an important contribution to historical research and a colourful, evocative piece of writing, while Tanja Luckin's cultural history of loss and memory in Australia during and after World War One, *The Gates of Memory*, is historical research and writing of a very high order.



FAW CHRISTINA STEAD AWARD – in its eighteenth year, an award for a work of fiction first published in Australia. Sponsored by **Merchant of Fairness Bookshop**

Winner (\$500) Peter Kocan *Fresh Fields* (HarperCollins Publishers)

Highly Commended: Stephen Carroll *The Gift of Speed* (HarperCollins Publishers)
Gail Jones *Sixty Lights* (The Harvill Press)
Thomas Shapcott *Spirit Wrestlers* (Wakefield Press)

Commended: Charlotte Wood *The Submerged Cathedral* (Vintage)
Denise Young *The Last Ride* (HarperCollins Publishers)

Judges' report: Joanne Lee Dow and Paddy O'Reilly

The entries in this year's Christina Stead Award contained a wide range of writing with qualities and genres that appeal very differently to different readers. A cluster of good novels explored themes ranging through family life and secrets, colonisation of the mind and the nation, love stories of faith and loss, the intersection of past and present. The winning entry, *Fresh Fields* by Peter Kocan, stood out for both judges.

Fresh Fields centres on ‘the youth’, an isolated teenage boy whose complex engagement with the figures of his imaginative fantasy drives his actions as he drifts from job to job and city to bush and back in his journey to an inevitable breaking point. Kocan’s spare, sharp prose depicts everyday lives and environments with remarkable vitality and flexibility. The novel’s sustained intensity reveals the poignant and disturbed inner life of the protagonist and, through him, difficult truths about Australia. A compelling and deeply affecting book.



FAW ANNE ELDER AWARD – in its twenty-eighth year, an award for a first book of poetry first published in Australia. *Sponsored by the **Anne Elder Trust**, managed by Catherine Elder and FAW.*

Winner (\$1000)	Lidija Cvetkovic	<i>War is not the Season for Figs</i>	(UQP)
Highly Commended:	Peter Lyssiotis	<i>The Bird, The Belltower</i>	(modern writing press)
	Miriam Wei Wei Lo	<i>Against Certain Capture</i>	(Five Islands Press)
Commended:	Lucy Alexander	<i>Feathered Tongues</i>	(Five Islands Press)
	David Musgrave	<i>To Thalia</i>	(Five Islands Press)

Judges’ report: Kevin Brophy and Robyn Rowland

Though the collections submitted this year provided a field of poetry that confronted and dealt with strong life experiences, those in contention for the short list were noticeable for their individual ‘voice’ in the work, and an attention to craft. *War is not the Season for Figs*, however, was outstanding. Consistently surprising, melodic and deeply attentive, the poetry imaginatively transformed a powerful family and national history. With a linguistic adventurousness and a fine lyric sensibility, the poetry deals with deeply disturbing issues of homeland, memory, death and war.

The Bird, the Belltower also acknowledges the importance of memory and place, in this instance Greece. There are brilliantly aphoristic moments in many of these poems. The inventiveness of this poetry, much more than being simply surrealist, explores a meaning that is timeless, moving and important. *Against Certain Capture* traces a family history of migration and ethnic tensions, not only by conveying a narrative but by entering into the intimately imagined lives of these characters. This fluid poetry is a display of skill, attention and confidence. *Feathered Tongues* achieves a balance of sensuality, intelligence, horror, humour and tenderness, with a strong use of image. *To Thalia* is notable for its observation of the natural and emotional worlds, bending landscapes and experiences to an always imaginative linguistic dexterity. With control of form, this poetry is capable of surprise.

PART 2: MANUSCRIPT AWARDS

FAW MALVERN NEWS SHEET COMMUNITY WRITERS’ AWARD – in its eighth year, for an anthology by a community writers’ group. *Sponsored by **Malvern News Sheet** and **Victorian Community Writers***

Winner (\$500)	Melbourne Poets Union (VIC)	“This Vision Thing”
Equal 2nd Prize (\$100 each)	The Neenish Tarts (NSW)	“The World is no Longer What it Seems”
	Nandina Writing Group (VIC)	“The Backyard of Life”
Highly Commended:	Bayside Poetry Group (VIC)	“Just A Moment”
	Tuesday Writers (VIC)	“The Year of the Monkey”
Commended:	Equal Writes (VIC)	“Embers”
	Wordsmith Poetry Group (VIC)	“Set Free”

Judge's report: Helen Cerne

Spending summer reading these entries was a pleasurable and rewarding experience for me. I found it more difficult than in other years to short-list manuscripts from those submitted. The entries were diverse and engaging, being either poetry or prose or a combination of both. Several anthologies had effectively unified themes. All submissions followed the competition entry guidelines for presentation.

This Vision Thing, a heady mix of diverse poems, was thought-provoking, amusing, challenging and confronting. The subject matter was varied but most poems explored effectively aspects of contemporary Australia, social and cultural issues. Technically interesting in poetic form and rich in subject matter, this collection was a compelling read of strong disparate voices.

The World is no Longer What it Seems, a collection of mostly stories, was an intelligent exploration of women's lives – fresh, insightful and unpredictable. *The Backyard of Life* was a short but fine selection of personal poems, engaging, lyrically precise and, for me, emotionally resonant.

Just A Moment, an involving collection of poetry with strong imagery and subject matter, and *The Year of the Monkey*, a good, thematic story selection with competent and diverse prose narratives, were Highly Commended. *Embers*, an effective book of bushfire stories, and *Set Free*, a moving collection of timely poetry, were Commended.



FAW DI CRANSTON AWARD – in its seventeenth year, for a play, screenplay or TV script written by a writer aged 25 or under. *Sponsored by* **Di Cranston**

Winner (\$150) Megan Pearson (VIC) “The People Game”

Commended: Sofie Bird (VIC) “Exponential”

Judge's report: Peter Krausz

The range of entries this year was disappointing, with writers either sticking to tried and true genres, and not adding anything to them, or attempting something different that was not thought through properly. Writing a play or screenplay involves a great deal of writing and rewriting, and clearly some writers are not prepared to put in the time and effort.

The Commended script, *Exponential*, tried something a bit different in the context of a claymation with a short but amusing script. The winning script, *The People Game*, is a well developed screenplay that with a few more drafts could turn into a good film or telemovie. It attempted to explore some psychological insights in a clearly identifiable Australian sub-culture and often hit the mark with its frank observations. Congratulations to this writer, who understands the audience for whom she is writing. I would like to maintain my plea from last year, in the screenplay area in particular, but also with any writing - Australian writers must concentrate on identifying their themes and audiences very carefully, and keep redrafting to improve the final product. A well written script will immediately resonate with an audience; it is not enough to just have good ideas. Here is a challenge to all writers: write something that challenges the audience and compels them to read on or to keep watching.



FAW JENNIFER BURBIDGE SHORT STORY AWARD – in its fifth year, in honour of Jennifer Burbidge, for a story dealing with any aspect of the lives of those who suffer from some form of mental disability and/or its impact on their families. *Sponsored by* **Mary Burbidge**

Winner (\$250) Samantha Sirimanne Hyde (NSW) “A Trace of Lavender”

Highly Commended: Pamela Miller (VIC) “The Thirtieth Birthday”

Commended: Joan Reid (VIC) “Belle of the Ball”

Judge's report: Mary Burbidge

I've just re-read my three chosen winners and cried even more than before. Cried and laughed. All the entries were pleasingly worthwhile to read, and nearly all met the criteria and were stories, not unformed accounts, but these three were clearly in a different class. *A Trace of Lavender*, the winning story, stood out for its different focus, its power and for the subtle, gentle manner in which it presented the cold societal cruelty that beset the protagonist's life, evoking the forbearance of his cultural background. *The Thirtieth Birthday* is an often-told story, the looking back at the anguish and bitterness of first learning of a child's disability from the happier present, but this writer captures the passion, the desolation and confusion so you can really feel it, and deftly interweaves the past and the present. *Belle of the Ball* is not so well-written or well-shaped, but by focusing on one character it did succeed in turning an account into a heart-warming story. I was at that Ball (not exactly that one, but one very like it) and loved reading about the behind-the-scenes dramas and triumphs that let it happen.



FAW MARY GRANT BRUCE SHORT STORY AWARD FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
– in its twenty-fourth year, for a manuscript written for readers aged 10 – 15 years. *Sponsored by*
Wellington Shire Council

Winner (\$600)	Nansi Kunze (VIC)	“Extreme!”
Second Prize (\$300)	Kevin Tan (VIC)	“Rock My Boat, Rock My World”
Highly Commended:	Garry Hurlle (VIC) Joanne Sandhu (NSW)	“The White Kangaroo” “Virtuality”
Commended:	Carmel Lillis (VIC) Lyndal Hill (VIC)	“Indi Grab” “Spring Frost”
Gippsland winner (\$200)	Nansi Kunze (VIC)	“Extreme”

Judge's report: Margaret Campbell

The short-listed entries ranged in ideas, including a schoolmate stuntman, skateboarders, virtual reality, Koori understanding through French eyes and the emotional evocation of a brother's drowning and a mother's depression. Style, structure and language enhanced these ideas, making it a very rewarding task to read the results. On a first reading of the entries the winner, *Extreme!* captured my attention. It is well structured and the dialogue authentic. Gills records the repercussions of his mate's stunts with flashes of humour and a pace that keeps the pages turning. The second prize winner, *Rock My Boat, Rock My World* (which also goes by the title of *List of things I wish I were or had*) is Libby's wish-list set against the background of her mother's indefinite hospitalisation. It is an exploration, without the detraction of sentimentality, of the effects of psychiatric illness on a young girl's life.



FAW JOHN SHAW NEILSON POETRY AWARD – in its thirty-fourth year, for a poem or suite of poems. *Sponsored by* ***Collected Works Bookshop***

Winner (\$500)	Bob Morrow (VIC)	“Hospice”
Second Prize (\$150)	Kathryn Lomer (TAS)	“A mother is like a tree”
Highly Commended:	Sandra Hill (VIC) Kate Mildenhall (VIC) Lauren Williams (VIC) Tim Collins (QLD)	“Islands of Light” “my spelling test” “The High Board” “Hammered into Heaven”

Judge's report: Phil Ilton

Hospice crystallizes the uncertainties of viewing the body of a just-deceased parent and the power of pathos. The son is embarrassed at not knowing 'what's correct on such occasions' and kissing a father he'd never kissed before. Regret is exquisitely expressed: 'We'd wasted so much of each other'. A vivid image – rain 'pulsing red hibiscus' against windows – doubles as a death metaphor. Our fear of death is encapsulated: 'no one now/between me and the finish line.'

A mother is like a tree has innovative reverse personification with an imaginative stream of consciousness. Evocative childhood images are blended with an engaging cameo of yesteryear's mums: 'mother's bosom (never breast)'.
Islands of Light has captivating images and inter-cultural nuances; *my spelling test* a poetic wrench of lingering guilt; *The High Board* a crisp picture of childhood gender dynamics and a fresh anti-sexist message; *Hammered into Heaven* powerful characterisations. Other contenders were *Old pain day*, *The Bell*, *Beloved carriers*, *The Great Depression*, *A Mirror in Alexandria*, *The Year of the Highlighter Pen*, *Bellerive's Old Fort*, *Damage Control*, *The Dark Within*.



FAW JIM HAMILTON AWARD – in its eleventh year, for an unpublished novel. *Sponsored by **Eltham High School***

Winner (\$1000)	Andy Kissane (NSW)	"Blood River"
Highly Commended	Sian Eldridge (QLD)	"Bringing Jeremy Home"
	Fiona Sievers (VIC)	"Adam of New Eden"
Commended	Caroline de Costa (QLD)	"Rookwood Island"
	Pamela Baker (VIC)	"The Triangle"

Judges' report: Clare Mendes and Marian Sidwell

There were 93 entries this year, so if you didn't win, don't be too hard on yourself. If you are keen for publication, however, here is our advice: take the time to edit your work. Good editing is as essential to a piece of writing as the writing itself. And don't underestimate the importance of your first paragraph, page and chapter – if you fail to grab your readers with these, you risk losing them.

From start to finish the winning manuscript, *Blood River*, never stops flowing. The writing is beautiful and seemingly effortless, the story simple but powerful. *Bringing Jeremy Home* displays a striking, purposeful use of language and a plot which never loses momentum, making this novel difficult to put down. *Adam of New Eden*, a compelling story written in a bold, poetic style, captivates the reader from page one. *Rookwood Island* is a story spanning five generations in which intense love, intrigue and shame are masterfully woven together. *The Triangle* is a sensitively written novel which explores its character's journey with vivid flashbacks and satisfying linkages.



FAW ANGELO B. NATOLI SHORT STORY AWARD – in its fifth year, honouring the late Angelo B. Natoli, who served for many years as FAW's Honorary Solicitor. For a short story of up to 3,000w. *Sponsored by **A. B. Natoli Pty.***

Equal Winners (\$300 each)	Vivienne Ulman (TAS)	"Signs I Don't Understand"
	Apeetha Arunagiri (VIC)	"The Installation of Nandi No-Ears"
Highly Commended:	Geoffrey Dean (TAS)	"Revolution"
	Tim Collins (QLD)	"The Continual Breaking of Fragile Glass"

Commended:	Penny Gibson (VIC)	“Nausea in the Key of D Minor”
	Janeen Samuel (VIC)	“Another’s Shoes”
	Monika Arnold (VIC)	“The Colour is Itchy”

Judge’s report: Louise Le Nay

The stories entered in this award were generally of a high standard and well presented. In judging, I selected those with a strong narrative structure. For the most part, the stories began strongly, often with delightful and compelling opening paragraphs, but often lost focus and energy towards the end; and sometimes the closing paragraph felt that it came from a different story altogether and was not sourced by, or intrinsic to, the opening. The two winning entries are excellent and it was difficult to choose between them. They are vastly different from each other but are both examples of passion and joy, even a little chaos. The Highly Commended and Commended entries are also well-crafted and distinctive. *Revolution*, in particular, contains a moment of realisation that stays on with the reader long after the story is over.

Resonance is one of the most important qualities in a short story, and one that I looked for with every entry.

PART 3: YOUNG WRITERS’ AWARDS

FAW YOUNG POET OF THE YEAR AWARD (for writers aged 10 – 14 years) – in its eleventh year. *Sponsored by **Aileen Kelly***

Winner (\$200)	Georgia Cubit (TAS)	“Dear Dad”
Second Prize (\$50)	Adelaide Kohler (WA)	“Maybe We’re All Trees”
Highly Commended:	Toddy Shilton (NT)	“II Poems”
Commended:	Madeline Townsend (VIC)	“Gone”
	Bree-Anna Ellett (VIC)	“Hidden”
	Grace Mugford (VIC)	“Time”
	Portia Smallbone (WA)	“Illustrations”

Judge’s report: Garth Madsen

I was impressed with the quality of this year’s entries. Most of the poets showed an understanding of poetic form and used strong imagery. Most chose to address serious topics, including social and political issues. Some explored the paradoxes of language and still others were just plain fun. Many poems were unfortunately marred by spelling and grammatical mistakes.

The two winning poems showed how simplicity often speaks most eloquently. Georgia Cubit’s *Dear Dad* takes the form of a boy’s letter to his father. The humour of its contents contrasts with the obvious pain at the split-up of his parents and this gives the poem its emotional impact. The poet shows insight into all her characters, and her choice of details reveals the depth of the major theme. Adelaide Kohler’s *Maybe We’re All Trees* uses cheeky half-rhyme and repetition to explore the age-old theme of our place as humans in nature.



FAW ALAN MARSHALL SHORT STORY AWARD (for writers aged 10 – 14 years) – in its eleventh year. *Sponsored by **Penguin Books Australia***

Winner (\$150)	Melanie Camp (VIC)	“Thirteen Years”
Second Prize (\$50)	Claire Grech (VIC)	“The Price of Eggs Today”

Highly Commended: Felicity Dinsmore (VIC) “The Lady on the Train”
 Laura John (VIC) “The Depths of my Being”
 Tom Wilkins (VIC) “M16”

Commended: Isobel Goldacre (WA) “The Crane”
 Alexandra Pelevaniuc (VIC) “Succumbing my empathy”
 Toddy Shilton (NT) “Tad’s Tale”

Judge’s report: Adrian Peniston-Bird

The Alan Marshall Award is unusual in that it has no word limit. Although this gives young writers flexibility, they should also remember that it is a *short story award*. A short story should grab the attention of the reader from the first sentence. A challenging task for any writer! It should also end with an interesting twist or a satisfying resolution.

The winner is Melanie Camp for *Thirteen Years*, a movingly written story about a widower reflecting on his failed marriage while he places a single red rose on his wife’s grave. The second prize goes to Claire Grech for *The Price of Eggs Today*, an entertaining yarn about a chance encounter between a bloke from the bush, who runs a retirement home for battery farmed chickens, and Delilah, a Harley Davidson bikie. Congratulations to the Highly Commended entrants, whose stories all showed great promise, and also to the Commended entrants, whose stories I thoroughly enjoyed.



FAW COLIN THIELE POETRY AWARD (for writers aged 15 – 20 years) – in its twenty-first year. *Sponsored by Michael Dugan*

Winner (\$200) Briony Throssell (VIC) “Dodging Butterflies”

Second Prize (\$100) Caroline Dart (VIC) “Two Towers”

Highly Commended: Cameron Pegg (QLD) “The Stones of Summer”
 Caroline Dart (VIC) “Let Go”
 Karen-Anne Coleman (NSW) “Queen Drab”

Judge’s report: Grant Caldwell

The winning poems aside, the general standard of poetry was not as strong as in previous years. A prevalence of cliched ideas and language, an over-use of antiquated techniques and a resort to antiquated and/or polemical themes seemed evident. The winning poem uses simple yet original, enigmatic imagery that engages the reader’s imagination and produces a potent emotional response, with an especially powerful final image that completes the poem in a way that takes the reader back into the poem for continued intriguing and fulfilling re-reading. The second prize winner is a long narrative verse that overcomes some early cliches to develop an evocative and difficult story of shocking sexual violence. The manner in which the poet explicates the sensitive subject matter is most impressive and affecting. The Highly Commended poems utilise exact, sharp, original language, holding their poems together for complete, effective works.



FAW JOHN MORRISON SHORT STORY AWARD (for writers aged 15 – 20 years) – in its eleventh year. *Sponsored by Paul Jennings*

Winner (\$200) Cameron Pegg (QLD) “Placebo”

Equal Second Prize (\$50 each) Crystal Sherriff (NSW) “Chasing Sunshine”
 Simon Chan (NSW) “I Dream of Rain”

PART 4: FAW CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN AWARD

The thirtieth year of an award to honour an Australian poet who has written work of sustained quality and distinction. FAW supplies a specially cast bronze plaque designed by Michael Meszaros. The recipient each year is chosen by judges on behalf of FAW. This year's judges were Sherryl Clark, Phil Ilton and Michael Dugan.

Winner: Kris Hemensley



From the President of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (Victoria)

The Fellowship of Australian Writers has great pleasure in announcing the results of its 2004 National Literary Awards. I would like to sincerely thank all entrants, sponsors and judges for their interest and support this year, and I congratulate those who have received awards.

Philip Rainford, 2004 President

FAW appreciates the support of the sponsors of the 2004 National Literary Awards:

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- Michael Dugan
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2005 NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

The 2005 National Literary Awards

will open on 1st September and close on 30th November 2005.

From August 2005 you will be able to download an entry form

from the FAW website: www.writers.asn.au

or you can obtain one by sending a SSAE to: **FAW, PO Box 8411, Armadale, Vic. 3143**

Entry forms are also included in the August/September issue of *The Australian Writer*, the regular publication of the Fellowship of Australian Writers (Victoria) Inc.

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS (or "FAW")

FAW was established in 1928 and has branches across Australia. With over 2000 members, the Victorian branch is the biggest and operates without government funding. Its daily activities are carried out by a voluntary committee who are dedicated to nurturing, supporting and providing opportunities for writers at all stages of their careers. FAW members receive 6 issues of *The Australian Writer* per year, advice on contracts, publishing and other matters, the chance to participate in the "Molly Blooms" readings series, and ongoing information about the National Literary Awards. If you would like information about FAW membership, please call (03) 9431 2370, visit www.writers.asn.au or write to: FAW, PO Box 8411, Armadale, Vic. 3143.