

2005 NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

conducted by the Fellowship of Australian Writers (Victoria)

RESULTS

PART 1: BOOK AWARDS

FAW MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING AWARD – in its thirty-third 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 Publishing**

Winner (\$1000)	Brenda Niall	Judy Cassab	(NSW)	(Allen and Unwin)
Highly Commended	Colin Dyer	The French Explorers and the Aboriginal Australians	(QLD)	(University of Queensland Press)
:	Tony Roberts	Frontier Justice: A History of the Gulf Country to 1900	(QLD)	(University of Queensland Press)
	Tom Keneally	The Commonwealth of Thieves	(NSW)	(Random House)

Judges' report: Jean Thornton and Bill Anderson

There was a large and varied number of entries this year and, in general, the standard of entries was high. Although it was difficult to decide on the final selection, the judges found they were able to agree on the winner and the commendations. Brenda Niall's biography of noted Australian artist Judy Cassab was judged the outstanding book entered in this award. This is a model biography of an important and fascinating artist, Holocaust survivor and migrant to Australia. Niall has researched Cassab's life with great diligence and sensitivity; the book is insightful, engrossing and beautifully written. It is a splendid biography and a major contribution to our understanding of one of our foremost artists

Colin Dyer's account of French exploration of Australia has an unusual and fascinating perspective, it is very well researched and is, moreover, very readable. Tony Robert's study of frontier justice and race relations in the Gulf Country demonstrates vast research and is an important, compelling and disturbing book - historical research and writing of a very high order. Tom Keneally's study of Australia's convict roots is based primarily on published sources but he brings his remarkable storytelling skills to his material and the result is a really wonderful contribution to popular history.

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

Winner (\$500)	Kate Grenville	The Secret River	(VIC)	(Text Publishing)
	Alex Skovron	The Poet	(VIC)	(Hybrid Publishing)
Highly Commended:	Paddy O'Reilly	The Factory	(VIC)	(Thompson Walker)
	Alex Miller	Prochownik's Dream	(NSW)	(Allen & Unwin)
Commended:	Robert Drewe:	Grace	(VIC)	(Viking Books)
	J.M. Coetzee:	Slow Man	(NSW)	(Random House)

Judges' report: Joanne Lee Dow and Philip Rainford

Experienced writers combined with good editing frequently rise to the top. While the wide range of genres made comparisons difficult, in this year's abundance those we mention below stood out.

Two very different works were judged to share the Award.

Kate Grenville: *The Secret River*: a resounding epic journey of survival from chancy subsistence on the Thames to prosperity in the Australian penal colony, it exposes the competing needs of past (and present) settlers and indigenous peoples.

Alex Skovron: *The Poet*: an elegant, seemingly simple, novella about creativity, isolation and devastating loss, it raises fundamental questions about art, humanity and reasons for living.

Paddy O'Reilly: *The Factory*: an accomplished portrayal of difficult personal and group dynamics in a vibrantly drawn contemporary Japan.

Alex Miller: *Prochownik's Dream*: offers powerful insights into the demands of creativity on artists and those around them.

Robert Drewe: *Grace*: a gripping evocation of hunters and hunted (crocodiles, asylum seekers, aborigines, archeologists, the two Graces) intermeshing present Australia in its past.

J. M. Coetzee: *Slow Man*: Rayment's accident focuses tensions between fate, individual autonomy and the actions of others in his life as a person and a fictional character.



FAW ANNE ELDER AWARD – in its twenty-ninth 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)	Max Ryan	Rainswayed Night	(NSW)	(Dangerously Poetic Press)
Highly commended:	Lucy Holt	Stories of Bird	(NSW)	(Poets Union Inc)
Commended:	Luis González Serrano	Cities with moveable parts	(NSW)	(Poets Union Inc)

Judges' report: Kevin Brophy and Robyn Rowland

The collections this year carried many memorable poems. Some books were strong but were not first books of poetry. Others contained striking poems on memory, family relationships, current politics and the issues of love and death. Though not prize-winners, three books in particular were notably stronger than the others and should be mentioned here. Sandon Mcleod's posthumous book *You, Me, Us ... Nuts* has some strong narrative poems fired with a logistics of image determined to strike home. John Briggs' *Night Flowers* and other poems is a thoughtful, fresh and intelligent collection. Joel Deane's

Subterranean Radio Songs is relaxed and full of flare.

This year there was a notable difference in the length of books. It is difficult to compare longer books with shorter books. It is difficult for a first poetry book to sustain an even standard over 150 pages, while in 32 pages, it is more possible to avoid flaws in a body of work. The best books conveyed a consistent 'voice'. Seamus Heaney wrote: 'Finding your own voice means that you can get your own feeling into your own words and that your words have the feel of you about them'.

Individual in 'voice', the top three books are impressive as first books and the decision between first and second was difficult.

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PART 2: MANUSCRIPT AWARDS

FAW MALVERN NEWS SHEET COMMUNITY WRITERS' AWARD – in its ninth year, for an anthology by a community writers' group. *Sponsored by* **Malvern News Sheet**

Winner: (\$500)	Northern Lights	(VIC)	True North
Highly Commended	Tuesday Writers Group	(VIC)	Cool Change
	Melbourne Poets Union	(VIC)	Kickers and Knockers
	Dandenong Ranges Poetry	(VIC)	Translating Steve Warbuton's Wasteland
Commended:	Harvest Writers	(VIC)	Ripples
	Wednesday Women's Writers	(VIC)	Breaking Loose

Judge's report: Helen Cerne

This community award was very competitive this year. Although there were only ten entries from all over Australia, they ranged from a good to a very high standard of writing and presentation with engaging and thought provoking collections submitted. In contrast to previous years the predominant writing mode was poetry: four very competent poetic anthologies were submitted, five effective collections of mixed prose and poetry and only one prose entry but consisting of riveting short stories. It was great to see 'community' writing groups* not only producing interesting, memorable collections but also well edited and well crafted work of a high professional standard.

True North A diverse, confronting collection of evocative poetry that packs an emotional punch yet surprises in its excellent variety of structure, language, imagery and movement.

Cool Change A strong, arresting collection of short stories exploring the theme of 'Cool Change' in fresh and diverting ways. Emotionally incisive, these tense narratives are well structured with a strong unity of impression which lingers in the mind.

Kickers and Knockers

Entertaining and clever poetic explorations of the mixed emotional impact of football on individuals

Translating Steve Warbuton's Wasteland Well unified collection, the interesting poems explore thematically the visual imagery of an artist.

Ripples Strong individual voices, an engaging collection of prose and poetry

Breaking Loose An effective, emotionally compelling anthology of women's perspectives and experiences.



FAW DI CRANSTON AWARD – in its eighteenth year, for a play, screenplay or TV
Sponsored by **Di Cranston**

Winner: (\$250)	Greg Woodland	(NSW)	The Visitor
Highly commended:	Meg McNena	(VIC)	Tarantella
	Steven Vagg	(NSW)	Rebel Tour
	Geoffrey Greaves	(NSW)	Geoffrey Greaves
Commended:	Michael Frank	(NSW)	Ra Choi
	Tim Collins	(QLD)	Burra & The Turkeys
	Darcy Lee Tindale	(NSW)	Dearest Egghead, Brain and Eve

Judge's report: Peter Krausz

The quality of entries this year has certainly improved overall. It was very gratifying to see an increased number of screenplays as well. The winner presented a very polished and involving screenplay, with a strong historical perspective set in the 1960s, that deserves to be filmed. The Highly Commended scripts covered the gamut from the 1980s Cricketing revolution, to the vagaries of Circus life, and a historical take on Lola Montez and Ballarat in the 1850s. This demonstrates the value of choosing interesting contexts and then writing well within that context. The Commended scripts also explored some distinctive issues quite well, ranging from survival of young Vietnamese in our community, to the issue of aboriginal heritage, tourism and reconciliation, to a bizarre take on a dysfunctional family. These entries stood apart from the majority of scripts, which tended to be overly reverential to genre, clumsily written, hackneyed and predictable at every turn, or just needing several more drafts. I would like to reiterate what I stated last year, that it is important for writers to take risks and be adventurous with ideas and writing style, and to find ways of engaging the reader with distinctive and challenging approaches. In particular, I would like to further encourage writers to develop screenplays, as this area needs further attention, so that we can produce high quality, well-written Australian films, that tell distinctly Australian stories.

FAW MARY GRANT BRUCE SHORT STORY AWARD FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE – in its twenty-fifth year, for a manuscript written for readers aged 10 – 15 years.

Sponsored by **Wellington Shire Council**

The Gippsland Regional Award has not been given this year due to lack of entries

Winner (\$600)	Jenni Overend	(VIC)	I Must Be Sick
Second Prize (\$300)	Simon Busch	QLD	Talk to Him
Highly Commended:	Penny Gibson	(VIC)	Magic Circles
	Margaret Crohn	(SA)	Baby Sitting? Get Real
	Jackie Mansourian	(VIC)	In the Light of the Moon
Commended:	Anthony Watson	(VIC)	Justin Time
	Vivienne Ulman	(TAS)	How to Ride the School Bus
	Paula Wilson	(VIC)	Saving Legs

Judge's report: Margaret Campbell

Overall, this year's entries were well-written which made judging an enjoyable challenge. Themes were varied, with a high proportion of realistic family topics rather than the usual predominance of fantasy, and it was refreshing to note fewer adult voices with didactic tones. Each of the prize-winning entries is well-crafted with effective use of dialogue to establish characters and they clearly 'show' rather than 'tell' the story.

The winning entry, I Must Be Sick, is a humorous glimpse of a young boy's awakening sexual awareness. Fresh and engaging, the authentic boy's voice carries the story.

Second place, Talk to Him, is a poignant account of a boy's relationship with his father, and his coming to terms with life after his mother's death.

The number of highly commended and commended awards reflects the higher standard of this year's entries.



7 FAW JOHN SHAW NEILSON POETRY AWARD – in its thirty-fifth year, for a poem or suite of poems.

Sponsored by **Collected Works Bookshop**

Winner (\$600)	David Campbell	(VIC)	Prey
Second Prize (\$150)	Jennifer Harrison	(VIC)	The Feminine Sublime
Highly Commended	Rob Wallis	(VIC)	Missing
	Ian C Smith	(VIC)	Strasbourg
	Esther Ottaway	(TAS)	Dimension and Light
Commended	Joanna Stanlake	(VIC)	Good and Tight

Judge's report: Phil Ilton

The subject of 'prey' is a disturbingly common tragedy, uncommon in poetry. Rich in symbolism, it's the cry of a girl frequently raped by her father. In Your Face language reflects the eagle tattooed on his chest; it pounds her face with every thrust: 'hard sweating man smell choking talons raking skin'. The words of this powerful dynamic are shattered in clumps across the page – whiteouts for her blackouts. Her trauma is accentuated by the mother who 'knows what she doesn't want to know'.

'The Feminine Sublime' is an innovative voyage through the experience of giving birth. The lines flow as with the amniotic fluid, skilfully tuning to an omnipresent telepathy shared by all mothers: 'I saw

every mother in every country in every age.’ Pain is a positive metaphor: ‘in one ecstasy all the world’s scythes – all those women who squat in fields’. An evocative ending has her arms as a ‘womb rocking at sea’, rhythmically repeated, a ‘lullaby, the first song of your first noon’

‘Missing’ depicts feelings (despair, guilt, over a missing loved one) with vivid images; ‘Strasbourg’ demonstrates how an inconsequential thought can be crafted with poetic power; ‘Dimension and Light’ is another original evocative poem about childbirth; in ‘Good and Tight (a pantoum)’ the poet plays with the pantoum form by effectively modifying the line beginnings and endings. Other contenders: ‘The Daughter’, ‘Departure Lounge’, ‘Sailing Halong Bay’, ‘Fistulating’, ‘So Much Light’, ‘Reading Your Book’, ‘The Chameleon’, ‘The Sky Ladder Adventure’, ‘Indifference’, ‘Since You Mentioned Sophia’.

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FAW JIM HAMILTON AWARD – in its twelfth year, for an unpublished novel.

Sponsored by **Eltham High School**

Winner (\$1000)	Nova Weeman	(VIC)	Monday Man
Highly Commended	John Somerville	(VIC)	The Umbrella Man
	Sian Eldridge	(QLD)	Sweet Waters
	Juliana Ryan	(VIC)	The Aging Aquarius
	Jennie Herrera	(TAS)	The Day the Visit
	Howard Kimber	(VIC)	Junior

Judges’ report: Phil Ilton and Garth Madson

Monday Man captures the reader with its first paragraph and carries them through to the last. We experience everything from the point of view of the quixotic main character, Steve, as he lives through just one day of his life. There is mundaneness to the activities Steve has planned for himself, but he manages to turn his day to mayhem. We feel his exuberance, his pain and his humiliation. Yet, through the parade of characters he encounters, we come to understand just how exasperating he is, and equally how little our fast-paced modern lives allow for the tolerance of difference.

The Umbrella Man is set at the time of the Sydney Olympics and deals with contemporary political and philosophical themes. It is populated by a vivid cast of characters. Sweetwater juxtaposes a woman's desperation to get pregnant with an environmental fight to stop a weir being built on a creek.

The Ageing Aquarius views the hippie age through the eyes of one of its children. It is a compassionate work but with no delusions. The Day, The Visit explores universal themes on a very small stage. Junior takes a new angle on the themes of death and regeneration. It is a mosaic of stories that builds up to a coherent whole. The standard was high and most writers

had control of their narrative. Other noteworthy entries were Open Cut, In the Shadow of the Stream and The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Wanker.

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FAW ANGELO B. NATOLI SHORT STORY AWARD – in its sixth 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.**

Winners (\$800)	Felicity Volk	(ACT)	Steal it with a Kiss
Highly Commended:	Mark Ragg	(NSW)	The-Man-who-sings babies-to sleep
Commended:	Kim Kitson	(NSW)	Finding Shelter
	Paulette Grittins	(VIC)	Grout on the Tiles
	Ruth Stewart	(VIC)	Learner Magpies
	Monika Arnold	(VIC)	I dreamt I was a baby dragon

Judge’s report: Louise Le Nay

The 2005 entries for the Angelo B. Natoli Short Story Competition were all of a high standard. They showed maturity and sophistication and spanned a variety of subjects. The final twenty were extremely hard to divide as a result of this, and I’m aware that there are fourteen entries (at least) not mentioned in the final line up which are certainly deserving of commendation.

What I was looking for:

- A strong beginning, incorporating some sort of emotional hook into the narrative.
- A strong closing (but this does not mean a sense of completion, necessarily)
- Skill with the written word
- Confidence and courage with language.
- Lack of cliché

Some stories began well but lost their main focus towards the end, or finished with a slightly prosaic tag-line. Some began with an uncertain focus, but ended with energy and vigour.

The final six Winning, Highly Commended and Commended entries are vastly different from each other in content – covering realism, magic realism, surrealism, domestic drama and comedy. However they are all characterized by a strong opening; sometimes only a simple sentence that catapults the reader into the heart of a story, and a closing that is not an end in itself, but a path to understanding, or a moment of enlightenment.

Each of the winning entries conveys a complexity of emotion through a simple narrative line. Each is moving without ever demanding or controlling the reader’s emotional response.

My congratulations to the winners and thanks to the FAW for the privilege of reading the entries.

PART 3: YOUNG WRITERS’ AWARDS

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

Winner (\$200)	Holly Sievers	(VIC)	Discovering Poetry
Second Prize (\$50)	Holly Sievers	(VIC)	Waiting for the Doors to Open
Highly Commended:	Larissa Peatfield	(NSW)	So You Died
Commended:	Renee Tamblyn	(SA)	The Little Shy Mouse

Judge's report: Michael Crane

I thought the winning poem Discovering Poetry was quite amusing as it was a satire on free verse poetry. Free verse has its place in literature though and I think all young writers should work on as many forms and styles of poetry as they can. I also think when writing poems that the poets should read the poems out aloud to themselves and they will eventually find a rhythm. To those who didn't win a prize I know it's disappointing not to win, but try and be patient and keep on working on your writing and hopefully you will write a poem that will get published or win a prize.

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

Winner (\$200)	Lucy Nicklin	(QLD)	The Deal was Done
Second Prize (\$50)	Claire Marie Brennen	(ACT)	Billy
Highly Commended:	Holly Sievers	(VIC)	Igor Can't Breath Fire
Commended:	Lucy Nicklin	(QLD)	In the Middle of the Night
	Imogen Koch	(SA)	Letters to Japan

Judge's report: Shirley Hassen

I found the story entrants to be well written interesting, quick and to the point and I enjoyed them all...

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

Winner (\$200)	Megan Stringer	(VIC)	Tell me Friend
Second Prize (\$100)	Chole Green	(QLD)	In Me

Judge's report: Grant Caldwell

Both the number of the quality of entrants were below previous years. Many entries utilised hackneyed phrases and/or ideas, many poems descending into cliché in both language and concept, while others used tired structures such as rhyming patterns and/or measured meter. The winning entries at least conveyed some originality of idea and language and engage the reader throughout.

The winning entry,, Tell me, Friend, evoked through repetition and metaphor a strong emotional concern for the subject what was maintained throughout the page and a half of the poem. The second prize-winning poem, In Me used intriguing imagery and language to successfully engage the reader to the end of the poem.

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

Winner (\$200)	Kayley Jane Peatfield	(NSW)	Love is Like a Tim Tam
Second Prize (\$100)	Megan Stringer	(VIC)	Jinba Ittia
Highly Commended:	Leanne Tran	(VIC)	Blinded Memories
	Chole Green	(QLD)	Crashing
	Megan Stringer	(VIC)	Tell Me Everything
	Megan Stringer	(VIC)	Shadows
Commended	Laura John	(VIC)	Refuge
	Jacob Kinniburgh	(VIC)	It's a Good Idea but.....
	Katherine O'Farrell	(TAS)	Tales of a Bank Built to hold Back the Waters of the Sea

Judge's report: Fred Curtis

It was a pleasure to read this year's short story entries from young writers.

I congratulate all entrants for their creative efforts. Most of the narratives started off well enough, but early promise sometimes petered out after the first paragraph.

Endings (notoriously difficult in this genre) were at times poorly executed giving the impression of running out of steam.

From your own experience, you know that anything that gets between reader and narrative is distracting, interrupts the flow, weakens the structure, becomes irritating, confusing and at worse causes loss of interest. Rid your work of unnecessary words and/or duplication of content: edit and then edit again. Take care in selecting adjectives and adverbs, ask yourself whether or not they add to or detract from your intended meaning or would a stronger noun or verb do a better job. A combination of poor grammar, needlessly 'hard' or unusual words, sans serif fonts, incomplete paragraphs, untidy layout and scruffy manuscript will not retain the interest of even the most patient of readers. Don't make you work too hard to decipher by using graphics that merge with the text (collage, montage.) Always think in terms of your reader; for example, it is a traditional courtesy in writing competitions to print on one side of the paper, to number the pages and show total number of words.

If you want to improve your writing skills, read Garry Disher's, *Writing Fiction: and Introduction to the Craft*, published by Allen & Unwin

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FAW MAVIS THORPE CLARK AWARD – in its twenty-first year.

Sponsored by **Graeme & Robyn Base**

PART 1 (for an anthology by a group of secondary school students)

Winner (\$200)	Footscray City College	(VIC)	Omniscience
Commended:	University High School	(VIC)	A Selection of Writing: 2005

Judge's report: Michael Dugan

'Omniscience' contains some very accomplished writing. The contributors have not shied off tackling difficult subject matter and in most cases have dealt with stories that are imaginative and original.

A Selection of Writing although less consistent in quality than the winning entry this short anthology includes some very fine pieces of writing, particularly among its short stories.

PART 2 (for an anthology by an individual student)

Winner (\$350)	Elspeth Powell	(VIC)	Pigtails and Walking Frames
Commended:	Jessica Lindon	(VIC)	Journeying Far From Home

Judge's report: Michael Dugan

'Pigtails and Walking Frames' is a substantial collection of writing whose author presents a high quality of writing throughout. I was impressed by the competence in both prose and verse. A thoughtful collection, reflecting vision and compassion of attitude.

'Journeying Far From Home' contains some fine writing in this uneven collection. I commend the author's courage in tackling the novella form in one of the included pieces. It is a difficult genre to write and in this instance was competently handled.

PART 4: FAW CHRISTOPHER BRENNAN AWARD

The thirty-first 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 Phil Ilton and Michael Dugan.

Winner: Fay Zwicky

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

The Fellowship of Australian Writers has great pleasure in announcing the results of its 2005 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, 2005 President

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

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2006 NATIONAL LITERARY AWARDS

The 2006 National Literary Awards

will open on 1st September and close on 30th November 2006.

From August 2006 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 973, Eltham Vic. 3095**

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 5573 visit

www.writers.asn.au or write to: **FAW, PO Box 973, Eltham Vic. 3095**