

Media Release

2019 Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist unveiled

A two-time winner and three first-time nominees are among the talented Australian authors shortlisted for the 2019 Miles Franklin Literary Award, announced today at the Mitchell Library of NSW – the “literary home” of Miles Franklin.

The Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund, alongside award trustee Perpetual, announced six authors – three men and three women – on a shortlist that gives readers unexpected insights into Australian life. The novels offer a remarkable collection of stories that explore the search for identity, trust, love and redemption, and the fraught bonds of friendships, families and communities.

Distinctive to this year’s shortlist is the diversity of the authors vying for the prestigious \$60,000 prize. A mix of emerging and established writers, the nominees include Rodney Hall for *A Stolen Season*, who has previously won the award for *Just Relations* (1982) and *The Grisly Wife* (1994); Gail Jones for *The Death of Noah Glass*, who has previously been shortlisted and longlisted, and Melissa Lucashenko for her novel *Too Much Lip*, who has also been previously longlisted.

Melissa’s novel was written as a result of her receiving the Copyright Agency’s \$80,000 Cultural Fund Author Fellowship in 2016. It has since been shortlisted for the Stella Prize, the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards, the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards and the Australian Book Industry Awards.

First-time nominees include Michael Mohammed Ahmad, whose novel *THE LEBS* won the Multicultural NSW Award at the 2019 NSW Premier’s Awards; Gregory Day, who won the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal in 2006; and Jennifer Mills, an award-winning writer of novels, short stories and poems.

The 2019 Miles Franklin Literary Award Shortlist is:

- **THE LEBS by Michael Mohammed Ahmad (Hachette Australia):** This coming-of-age novel explores the life of Bani Adam, as he grows up in Sydney’s western suburbs in a post 9/11 political climate. Bani has to negotiate his sense of identity and belonging in this hostile, confusing world, while dreaming of so much more.
- **A SAND ARCHIVE by Gregory Day (Picador Australia):** Seeking stories of Australia’s Great Ocean Road, a young writer stumbles across a manual from a minor player in the road’s history, engineer FB Herschell. The slim, grey volume appears unremarkable, but it paints a surprising portrait of its author between the lines.
- **A STOLEN SEASON by Rodney Hall (Picador Australia):** This novel explores the stories of three people whose lives have been changed profoundly by war, men and money, and their experiences of a period of life they never thought possible.

- **THE DEATH OF NOAH GLASS by Gail Jones (Text Publishing):** Having just returned from a trip to Sicily, art historian Noah Glass is discovered floating face down in the swimming pool at his Sydney apartment. Complicating matters, a sculpture has gone missing from a museum in Palermo, and Noah is a suspect. His children Martin and Evie must come to terms with their father's death in this novel of grief, loss and artistic contemplation. Gail has previously been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin for *Sixty Lights* (2006), *Dreams of Speaking* (2007), *Sorry* (2008) and longlisted for *Five Bells* (2012).
- **TOO MUCH LIP by Melissa Lucashenko (The University of Queensland Press):** Wise-cracking Kerry Slater has spent a lifetime avoiding two things – her hometown and prison. But now her Pop is dying and she's an inch away from the lockup, so she heads south on a stolen Harley. With plans to spend 24 hours, tops, over the border, she quickly realises that family and Bundjalung country have other plans. Melissa has been previously longlisted for the Miles Franklin with *Mullumbimby* in 2014.
- **DYSCHRONIA by Jennifer Mills (Picador Australia):** One morning, the residents of a small coastal town somewhere in Australia wake to discover the sea has disappeared. One among them has been plagued by troubling visions of this cataclysm for years. Is she a prophet? Does she have a disorder that skews her perception of time? Or is she a gifted and compulsive liar?

Speaking on behalf of the judging panel, author and literary critic, Dr Bernadette Brennan, said:

“The 2019 shortlist showcases a diverse and exciting range of Australian voices and experiences. Each writer has been unafraid to take risks in their narrative, in one or more of structure, subject matter or style. These books celebrate, for the most part, some of the complex, disparate and urgent aspects of contemporary Australian life.”

Joining Dr Bernadette Brennan on the judging panel is Mitchell Librarian of the State Library of NSW and Chair of panel, Richard Neville, The Australian journalist Murray Waldren, author and book critic Dr Melinda Harvey, and Sydney-based bookseller Lindy Jones.

The Copyright Agency's CEO, Adam Suckling, said: “The Copyright Agency is proud to be announcing this year's nominees as part of its ongoing support and celebration of Australia's creative writing industry. The shortlist once again engages and challenges our view of Australian life, and showcases the vibrant voices of some of the country's most talented authors.”

Each of the 2019 shortlisted authors receives \$5,000 from the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Perpetual's General Manager of Community and Social Investments, Caitriona Fay, congratulated the shortlisted authors.

“More than 60 years after Stella Miles Franklin's trailblazing philanthropic endeavour, the Australian literary community continues to thrive, and as trustee of this award we are incredibly proud of her enduring legacy. I'd like to congratulate the six shortlisted authors who, through their novels, offer new perspectives on Australian culture and society.”

The 2019 winner, to be announced on 30 July, will receive \$60,000 in prize money for the novel judged as being ‘of the highest literary merit’ and which presents ‘Australian life in any of its phases’.

The award's media partner for 2019 is the ABC.

For further information about the Miles Franklin Literary Award, visit www.milesfranklin.com.au/

For enquiries related to The Miles Franklin Literary Award, Perpetual, Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund or to request an interview with finalists or judges please contact:

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About the Miles Franklin Literary Award

Perpetual is Trustee of the Miles Franklin Literary Award. The Award was established in 1954 in the will of My Brilliant Career author Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin to celebrate the Australian character and creativity. It supports the betterment of Australian literature by each year recognising the novel of the highest literary merit which presents Australian Life in any phase. Since first being awarded in 1957, the Award has distributed more than \$1.1 million to authors. Those wishing to be part of the Miles Franklin legacy can donate to the Franklin Support Fund to become a friend of the Award. Please visit the website for further details.

Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund has been a proud supporter of the Miles Franklin Award since 2004, granting more than half a million dollars to this premier Australian literary prize.

www.milesfranklin.com.au

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers and distributors of philanthropic funds with \$2.7 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds as at 30 June 2018. Perpetual is trustee for approximately 1,000 charitable trusts and endowments and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Perpetual also assists charities and not-for-profit organisations with investment advice and management.

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About the Copyright Agency and Cultural Fund

The Copyright Agency is an Australian not-for-profit organisation that has been standing up for creators for more than 40 years. We enable the reuse of copyright-protected words and images in return for fair payment to creators.

The Cultural Fund is the philanthropic arm of the Copyright Agency, contributing meaningfully to a wide range of Australian cultural, educational and artistic programs and creators. Through its support it fosters greater understanding and engagement of national culture both locally and internationally.

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