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Alex Skovron wins 2023 Patrick White Literary Award

Perpetual, as trustee, has announced Victorian-based author Alex Skovron as the winner of the 2023 Patrick White Award.

The award recognises Skovron's achievements as a poet and fiction writer. His poetry has appeared widely in Australia and overseas, and his books have won or been shortlisted for a number of major awards. As well as poetry, Skovron has published stories and a novella. His work has been translated into other languages, including Czech, French, Chinese and Dutch.

On winning the Award, Skovron commented: "I am thrilled to have been chosen as the recipient of the Patrick White Literary Award for 2023. This wonderful surprise has come at something of a milestone moment in my life, on the heels of my 75th birthday, and to receive the Award means a great deal to me – both as a recognition of my work to date, and as further encouragement towards what I still hope to achieve. Above all, I feel honoured to be joining such an impressive cohort of past winners, many of whose stories and poems I've read and admired over many years. My thanks to the judges, to Perpetual Limited – and of course to Patrick White."

Skovron will receive \$20,000 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Australian literature.

The Patrick White Literary Award was established by Nobel Prize winning author Patrick White to advance Australian literature 'by encouraging the writing of novels, short stories, poetry and plays for publication or performance'. It is awarded to an author who has made an ongoing contribution to Australian literature but may not have received adequate recognition.

The Award is managed by Perpetual as trustee, and many authors of different status and experience may qualify for consideration.

Perpetual National Manager, Philanthropy & Non-Profit Services, Jane Magor said: "In establishing the award, Patrick White created a legacy - to reward Australian writers and help them to continue to flourish. This legacy now extends over 49 years and has had a significant impact on the lives of so many in the literary community. It is a demonstration of the importance of philanthropy."

Alex will be officially honoured for his contribution to Australian literature at the Patrick White Literary Award celebration at Readings State Library Victoria, on Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 6pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend. To RSVP, email philanthropy@perpetual.com.au

The 2023 judging panel included Dr Felicity Plunkett (Chair), Dr Julieanne Lamond and Ms Michelle de Krester.

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Note to Editors

About the Patrick White Literary Award

The Patrick White Award was established by the author with the proceeds of his 1973 Nobel Prize for Literature and is managed by Perpetual as trustee of the philanthropic trust behind it. The Award is given annually to an author who has 'already made a contribution to Australian Literature' but who may not have 'received due recognition for that contribution'. The Award is intended to encourage and support ongoing creativity in its recipients.

The broad terms of the Award mean that authors of different status and experience may qualify for consideration. Many winners have been older writers but some have been younger, and all have been encouraged to continue writing. Poets, novelists, playwrights and short story writers have been among the 48 recipients who have so far benefited from Patrick White's generosity and vision. Past winners include Christina Stead, Fay Zwicky, Elizabeth Harrower, Tony Birch, Samuel Wagan Watson, Adam Aitken and Antigone Kefala.

The judging committee's members are Dr Felicity Plunkett (Chair), Dr Julieanne Lamond and Ms Michelle de Kretser.

About Alex Skovron and his work: The Judging Committee's citation

The winner of the 2023 Patrick White Award is Alex Skovron

Alex Skovron is the author of eight collections of poetry, a novella and a book of short stories. Born in Poland in 1948, Skovron lived briefly in Israel before migrating with his family to Sydney in 1958. Having completed his studies there, he worked as an editor for book publishers in Sydney and Melbourne, in the reference, education, children's, trade and literary divisions. He was on the editorial staff of the third edition of *The Australian Encyclopaedia* (1972–77), and subsequently worked as general editor of *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Australia* (1977–79). On moving to Melbourne in 1980, he joined Macmillan's education division as an editor. From 1985, he was a senior editor with Hutchinson, Dent and Houghton Mifflin respectively. Starting in the early 1990s, he worked as a freelance editor.

Skovron published his first poetry collection, *The Rearrangement*, in 1988 (Melbourne UP). It won the Anne Elder and Mary Gilmore awards for best first book of poetry and was shortlisted in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Skovron has gone on to publish seven further collections of poetry: *Sleeve Notes* (Hale & Iremonger/Golvan Arts, 1992); *Infinite City: 100 Sonnetinas* (Five Islands Press, 1999), which was shortlisted in the Age Book of the Year and Victorian Premier's Literary awards; *Chess and Other Poems* (chapbook, Picaro Press, 2002); *The Man and the Map* (Five Islands Press, 2003); *Autographs: 56 poems in prose* (Hybrid Publishers, 2008), shortlisted in the Australian Capital Territory Poetry Prize; *Towards the Equator: New & Selected Poems* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2014), shortlisted in the Prime Minister's Literary Awards; and *Letters from the Periphery* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2021).

In *Australian Book Review*, Philip Salom notes that Skovron's poetry engages with 'learning, knowledge and memory, and the way in which these work to satisfy, or frustrate, a metaphysical sense of order, even truth'. In the *Sydney Review of Books*, Judith Beveridge describes an overarching concern in Skovron's poetry with 'the legacy of war and oppressive cultural forces, the difficulties of the Jewish émigré placed in cross-currents of culture, [and] the value of the imagination to mediate and unmask the absurdity of reality constrained by dogmatic authority'. She characterises his poetry as 'intelligent, witty, erudite, inventive, [and] versatile in both subject and execution'.

Skovron has also published a novella, *The Poet* (Hybrid Publishers, 2005), joint winner of the Fellowship of Australian Writers Christina Stead Award, and a collection of stories, *The Man who Took to his Bed* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2017). Helen Garner, Jill Jones and Alex Miller have all praised what Jones, writing in *Australian Book Review*, calls Skovron's 'disquieting, uncanny narratives'. Jones goes on to remark on his 'attentiveness to language and the nuance of place'.

The judges were particularly impressed with the formal diversity, imaginative reach, figurative wealth and technical control that mark Skovron's oeuvre. They were struck by his ability to move the reader through reflections on family and the workings of memory, as well as by his gift for evoking impersonal historical forces in ways that render them intimate and direct.

The judges congratulate Alex Skovron on winning the 2023 Patrick White Award.

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers of philanthropic funds, with \$3.3 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds (as at 30 June 2023). Perpetual is trustee for over 1000 [charitable trusts and endowments](#) and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Each year Perpetual distributes more than \$129 million to community organisations on behalf of its clients. Perpetual also assists charities and not-for-profit organisations with [investment advice and management](#).

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