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Ten outstanding novels recognised in prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award 2025 longlist

Perpetual, the trustee of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, has unveiled this year's longlist, featuring ten remarkable novels that offer a kaleidoscopic portrayal of Australian life in all its diversity. The selected works, which include two former winners and two past short-listees, celebrate the talent and creativity of authors from across the nation and set the stage for an exciting journey toward the prestigious award.

The Award celebrates novels of the highest literary merit that tell stories about Australian life. The winner will receive \$60,000.

The 2025 Miles Franklin Literary Award longlist is:

Author	Novel	Publisher
Brian Castro	<i>Chinese Postman</i>	Giramondo Publishing
Melanie Cheng	<i>The Burrow</i>	Text Publishing
Michelle de Kretser	<i>Theory & Practice</i>	Text Publishing
Winnie Dunn	<i>Dirt Poor Islanders</i>	Hachette Australia
Julie Janson	<i>Compassion</i>	Magabala Books
Yumna Kassab	<i>Politica</i>	Ultimo Press
Siang Lu	<i>Ghost Cities</i>	University of Queensland Press
Fiona McFarlane	<i>Highway 13</i>	Allen & Unwin
Raeden Richardson	<i>The Degenerates</i>	Text Publishing
Tim Winton	<i>Juice</i>	Hamish Hamilton (Penguin Random House)

According to the judging panel, "The limits of novelistic expression continue to be challenged in Australian letters. This year's field of Australian novels judged for the Miles Franklin Literary Award encompassed a sometimes dizzying variety of writing. From political fables to picaresque counter-histories, from taut Covid parables to heart-warming family chronicles, Australian life in all its multiplicity is on display in these novels. The novels enlarge our sense of what it is to be Australian as a diasporic nation with an ancient and living human history. Pulsing through these works are the memories and imaginaries of medieval China, modern India, Moana Pasifika and the Indigenous experience of colonisation. Settings shifted from Sydney's outer suburbs to Melbourne's inner city, from the Adelaide Hills to the state forests of the Southern Highlands.

The novels also straddle the phases of life, depicting the experience of young children and the existential crises of aging. Writers were unwilling to take the form of the novel for granted and showed a restlessness and inventiveness that opened up our reading in startling ways. Duelling timelines, unexplained discontinuities, temporal uncertainty, and absurdist comedy all worked through these novels to strip the patina from everyday life. There was also a marked singularity in the voices of narration. More than anything, it was the authenticity of these voices, with all their ticks and textures, that spoke to us judges.”

The 2025 judges are Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian of the State Library of NSW and Chair; literary scholar, A/Prof Jumana Bayeh; literary scholar and translator, Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty; literary scholar and author Prof Tony Hughes-d'Aeth; and author and literary scholar, Prof Hsu-Ming Teo.

Last year, the Miles Franklin Literary Award was awarded to Alexis Wright for her novel, *Praiseworthy* (2024).

ENDS

For further information about the Miles Franklin Literary Award: <http://www.milesfranklin.com.au/>

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About the Miles Franklin Literary Award www.milesfranklin.com.au

Perpetual is the Trustee for the Miles Franklin Literary Award. The Award was established in 1954 by the estate 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 of its phases. Since being established, the Award has distributed over \$1.54 million in philanthropic funds 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.

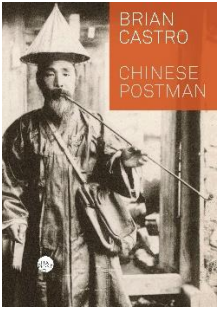
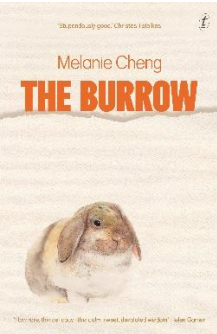
Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund is a long-time supporter of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, providing \$5,000 to each of the finalists and granting more than half a million dollars to this premier Australian literary prize since 2004.

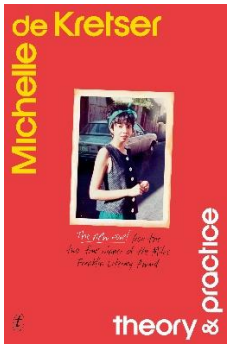
About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers of philanthropic funds, with \$3.6 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds (as at 30 June 2024). 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 \$123 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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Background Information – 2025 Miles Franklin Longlist

	<p>Brian Castro <i>Chinese Postman</i></p> <p>BIOGRAPHY: Brian Castro was born in Hong Kong of Portuguese, Chinese and English parentage. He is the author of ten novels, including <i>Birds Of Passage</i>, <i>Double-Wolf</i>, <i>After China</i>, <i>Stepper</i>, <i>Shanghai Dancing</i>, <i>The Garden Book</i>, and <i>Blindness and Rage</i>. He has won The Age Book of the Year Award, the Victorian Premier’s Award (three times), the National Book Council Award, the NSW Premier’s Award and the Queensland Premier’s Literary Award and the Prime Minister’s Prize for Poetry. In 2014 Castro received the Patrick White Award in recognition of his significant contribution to Australian literature. His latest book is <i>Chinese Postman</i>, a novel released by Giramondo in 2024.</p> <p>SYNOPSIS: Abraham Quin is in his mid-seventies, a migrant, thrice-divorced, a one-time postman and professor, a writer now living alone in the Adelaide Hills. In <i>Chinese Postman</i> he reflects on his life with what he calls ‘the mannered and meditative inaction of age’, offering up memories and anxieties, obsessions and opinions, his thoughts on solitude, writing, friendship and time. He ranges widely, with curiosity and feeling, digressing and changing direction as suits his experience, and his role as a collector of fragments and a surveyor of ruins. He becomes increasingly engaged in an epistolary correspondence with Iryna Zarebina, a woman seeking refuge from the war in Ukraine. As the correspondence opens him to others, the elaboration of his memories tempers his melancholy with a playful enjoyment in the richness of language, and a renewed appreciation of the small events in nature. This understanding of the experience of old age is something new and important in our literature. As Quin comments, ‘In Australia, the old made way for the young. It guaranteed a juvenile legacy.’</p>
	<p>Melanie Cheng <i>The Burrow</i></p> <p>BIOGRAPHY: Melanie Cheng is a writer and general practitioner. She was born in Adelaide, grew up in Hong Kong and now lives in Melbourne. Her debut collection of short stories, <i>Australia Day</i>, won the Victorian Premier’s Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript in 2016 and the Victorian Premier’s Literary Award for Fiction in 2018. <i>Room for a Stranger</i>, her highly acclaimed first novel, was published in 2019.</p> <p>SYNOPSIS: Amy, Jin and Lucie are leading isolated lives in their partially renovated, inner city home. They are not happy, but they are also terrified of change. When they buy a pet rabbit for Lucie, and then Amy’s mother, Pauline, comes to stay, the family is forced to confront long-buried secrets. Will opening their hearts to the rabbit help them to heal or only invite further tragedy?</p> <p><i>The Burrow</i> tells an unforgettable story about grief and hope. With her characteristic compassion and eye for detail, Melanie Cheng reveals the lives of others—even of a small rabbit.</p>



Michelle de Kretser
Theory & Practice

BIOGRAPHY:

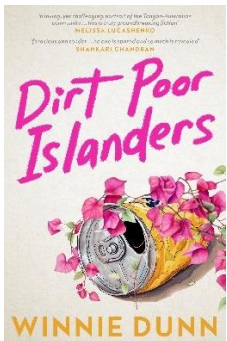
Michelle de Kretser was born in Sri Lanka. She lives in Warrane/Sydney on unceded Gadigal land. An honorary associate of the English Department at the University of Sydney, she has won several awards for her fiction. *Theory & Practice* is her seventh novel.

SYNOPSIS:

It's 1986, and 'beautiful, radical ideas' are in the air. A young woman arrives in Melbourne to research the novels of Virginia Woolf. In bohemian St Kilda she meets artists, activists, students—and Kit. He claims to be in a 'deconstructed' relationship, and they become lovers. Meanwhile, her work on the Woolfmother falls into disarray.

Theory & Practice is a mesmerising account of desire and jealousy, truth and shame. It makes and unmakes fiction as we read, expanding our notion of what a novel can contain.

Michelle de Kretser, one of Australia's most celebrated writers, bends fiction, essay and memoir into exhilarating new shapes to uncover what happens when life smashes through the boundaries of art.



Winnie Dunn
Dirt Poor Islanders

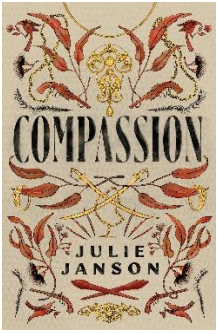
BIOGRAPHY:

Winnie Dunn is Tongan-Australian writer from Mount Druitt. She is the general manager of Sweatshop Literacy Movement. Her debut novel is *Dirt Poor Islanders* (Hachette, 2024)

SYNOPSIS:

For Meadow Reed, a half-Tongan, half-White girl, the world is bigger than the togetherness she has grown up in. Finding her way means pushing against the constraints of tradition, family and self until she becomes whole in her own right. Meadow is going to see that being a dirt poor Islander girl is more beautiful than she can even begin to imagine.

Dirt Poor Islanders is a potent, mesmerising novel that opens our eyes to the brutal fractures navigated when growing up between two cultures and the importance of understanding all the many pieces of yourself.



Julie Janson
Compassion

BIOGRAPHY:

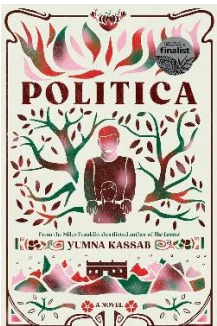
Julie is a Burruberongal woman of the Darug Aboriginal nation NSW. She is a novelist, playwright, and poet. While living in remote Northern Territory in Yolngu communities in her early years as a teacher, Julie wrote plays and made giant puppets, masks and costumes with Yolngu students. Her career as a playwright resulted in ten productions at various theatres such as Sydney St Theatre, Belvoir St Theatre, Adelaide Festival Centre and Sydney Opera House Studio. *Black Mary and Gunjies* was published by Aboriginal Studies Press. Her plays have been produced in Arizona, USA and Makassar, Indonesia.

Her Indigenous crime novel *Madukka the River Serpent* (UWA Publishing 2022) was longlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award 2023 and the Davitt Award 2023. *Benevolence*, an Indigenous historical novel published by Magabala in 2020, and later published by Harper Collins in the USA and UK, was shortlisted for the Barbara Jefferis Award 2022 and in 2020 was longlisted for the NIB Literary Award and the Voss Literary Prize. *Compassion* (Magabala 2024) is a sequel to *Benevolence*. As a poet she is co-recipient of the Oodgeroo Noonuccal Poetry Prize 2016 and winner of the Judith Wright Poetry Prize 2019.

SYNOPSIS:

From the acclaimed author of the Miles Franklin longlisted *Madukka: The River Serpent* (UWA) and the Barbara Jefferis Award shortlisted *Benevolence*, *Compassion* continues Julie Janson's emotional and intense literary exploration of the complex and dangerous lives of Aboriginal women during the 1800s in colonial New South Wales, which she began in *Benevolence* as a counter narrative to colonial history in Australian literature.

Compassion is the dramatised life story of one of Julie Janson's ancestors who went on trial for stealing livestock in New South Wales, and it is an exciting and violent story of anti-colonial revenge and roaming adventure. A gripping fictive account of Aboriginal life in the 1800s, *Compassion* follows the life of Duringah, AKA Nell James, the outlaw daughter of the Darug hero of *Benevolence*, Muraging.



Yumna Kassab
Politica

BIOGRAPHY:

Yumna Kassab is a writer from Western Sydney. She studied medical science and neuroscience at university. Her fiction has been listed for prizes including the Miles Franklin Literary Award, Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, Queensland Literary Awards, NSW Premier's Literary Awards, and The Stella Prize.

SYNOPSIS:

The war broke out and she decided to call her dad.

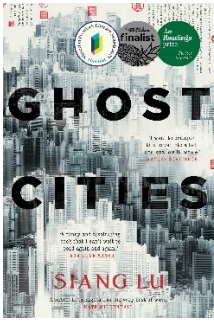
Weeks and weeks we do not speak, and the weeks become months and then they are so many years.

She imagines herself starting this story.

She imagines how she will tell this story later to someone else.

We hadn't spoken for years but then the war broke out...

As conflict plays out across an unnamed region, its inhabitants deal with the fallout. Families are torn apart and brought together. A divide grows between those on either side of the war, compromises are struck as the toll of violence impacts near and far. We learn about those who are left behind and those who choose to leave in a great scattering. As the stories of those affected play out they weave together to show the whole of a society in the most extreme of circumstances. Even after the last shot is fired, their world will never recover.



Siang Lu
Ghost Cities

BIOGRAPHY:

Siang Lu is the author of *Ghost Cities* and *The Whitewash*, and the creator of Silly Bookstagram. *The Whitewash* won the ABIA Audiobook of the Year in 2023. *Ghost Cities* has been shortlisted for five literary awards, including the 2025 Russell Prize for Humour Writing, the VPLA John Clarke Humour Award, the Readings New Australian Fiction Prize and The University of Queensland Fiction Book Award and The Courier-Mail People's Choice Queensland Book of the Year Award at the Queensland Literary Awards.

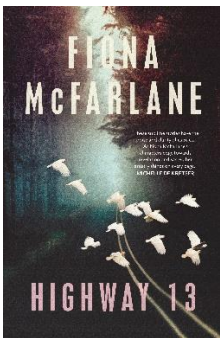
In 2023 Siang was named one of the Top 40 Under 40 Asian-Australians at the Asian-Australian Leadership Awards.

SYNOPSIS:

Ghost Cities – inspired by the vacant, uninhabited megacities of China – follows multiple narratives, including one in which a young man named Xiang is fired from his job as a translator at Sydney's Chinese Consulate after it is discovered he doesn't speak a word of Chinese and has been relying entirely on Google Translate for his work.

How is his relocation to one such ghost city connected to a parallel odyssey in which an ancient Emperor creates a thousand doubles of Himself? Or where a horny mountain gains sentience? Where a chess-playing automaton hides a deadly secret? Or a tale in which every book in the known Empire is destroyed – then re-created, page by page and book by book, all in the name of love and art?

Allegorical and imaginative, *Ghost Cities* will appeal to readers of Haruki Murakami and Italo Calvino.



Fiona McFarlane
Highway 13

BIOGRAPHY:

Fiona McFarlane is the author of the novel *The Night Guest*, which was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and a collection of short stories, *The High Places*, which won the International Dylan Thomas Prize. Her short fiction has been published in the *New Yorker*, *Best Australian Stories* and *Zoetrope: All-Story*. Her most recent novel, *The Sun Walks Down*, was shortlisted for the Walter Scott Prize, the Age Book of the Year Award, the ABIA Award for Literary Fiction Book of the Year and the Prime Minister's Literary Awards. Born in Sydney, Fiona teaches creative writing at the University of California, Berkeley.

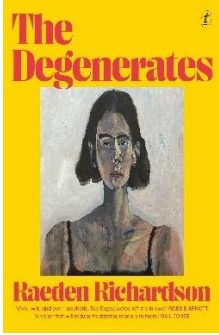
SYNOPSIS:

A gripping, haunting work about the reverberations of a serial killer's crimes in the lives of everyday people.

In 1998, an apparently ordinary Australian man is arrested and charged with a series of brutal murders of backpackers along a highway. The news shocks the nation, bringing both horror and resolution to the victims' families, but its impact travels even further - into the past, as the murders rewrite personal histories, and into the future, as true crime podcasts and biopics tell the story of the crimes.

Highway 13 takes murder as its starting point, but it unfolds to encompass much more: through the investigation of the aftermath of this violence across time and place, from the killer's home town in country Australia to the tropical Far North, and to Texas and Rome, McFarlane presents an unforgettable, entrancing exploration of the way stories are told and spread, and at what cost.

From the acclaimed author of *The Sun Walks Down* and *The Night Guest* comes a captivating account of loss and fear, and their extended echoes in individual lives.



Raeden Richardson
The Degenerates

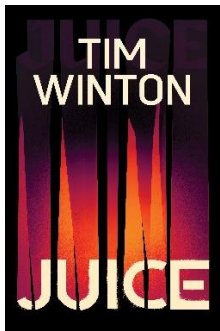
BIOGRAPHY:

Raeden Richardson is the author of the debut novel, *The Degenerates* (Text Publishing, 2024). His writing has appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *Meanjin*, *The Age*, *Griffith Review* and *New Australian Fiction*. He is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and has received support from Creative Australia, the Ian Potter Cultural Trust and Yaddo.

SYNOPSIS:

Following the interwoven lives of four characters across India, Australia and the United States, the novel takes root in Melbourne and brings its streets, shopping centres and laneways to life with astounding originality—the city may never be the same again.

The Degenerates radiates with Titch's fanaticism and Ginny's obsessions. Somnath's devastating history reflects every life divided around the globe. And Maha, the heart of the novel, is an extraordinary creation, an abiding figure of modern salvation. Brimming with vitality, humour, intelligence and brilliant writing, *The Degenerates* engages with the realities of modern loneliness and every form of departure—from our homes, from our families and even from life itself. In propulsive prose, *The Degenerates* summons the power of storytelling, disrupts conventional narratives and pays tribute to those lives often lost in the margins.



Tim Winton
Juice

BIOGRAPHY:

Tim Winton is the author of 30 books. His work has been widely translated and adapted for film, television, stage and radio. He lives in Western Australia.

SYNOPSIS:

Two fugitives, a man and a child, drive all night across a stony desert. As dawn breaks, they roll into an abandoned mine site. From the vehicle they survey a forsaken place – middens of twisted iron, rusty wire, piles of sun-baked trash. They're exhausted, traumatised, desperate now. But as a refuge, this is the most promising place they've seen. The child peers at the field of desolation. The man thinks to himself, *this could work*.

Problem is, they're not alone.

So begins a searing, propulsive journey through a life whose central challenge is not simply a matter of survival, but of how to maintain human decency as everyone around you falls ever further into barbarism.