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Media Release

David Brooks wins Patrick White Literary Award

David Brooks has been awarded the Patrick White Literary Award, a richly deserved recognition of his profound and wide-ranging contributions to Australian literature, contemporary poetry, and environmental thought.

Brooks is the author of six poetry collections, four novels, four volumes of short stories, and four works of nonfiction that explore the ethical and emotional dimensions of the human-animal relationship. His work has won or been shortlisted for major prizes across many genres, including most recently a Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry in 2025.

On winning the award, Brooks commented: "This is a very special award and means a great deal to me: that it cannot be applied for; that it's assessed by a panel of one's peers; that it's not given for a particular book but recognises work in numerous genres and over a long stretch of time. Its first recipient was a remarkable novelist whose work I've always admired; its second was a friend, a major poet of the landscape I was born into, and wrote one of my all-time favourite poems. Since then the list of recipients has included many of the best and most interesting Australian writers of the last fifty years. I never expected to be in such company, am greatly honoured, and a little stunned, to find myself there, but, like a cat who suddenly discovers it's got *ten* lives after all, will do all I can to confirm my place."

Established by Nobel Laureate Patrick White, the Patrick White Literary Award seeks to advance Australian literature by encouraging the writing of novels, short stories, poetry and plays for publication or performance. It is presented annually to an author who has made a sustained contribution to Australian literature, particularly those whose work may not have received the recognition it deserves.

The $20,000 award is administered by Perpetual as trustee.

Perpetual National Manager, Philanthropy & Non-Profit Services, Jane Magor said: "Australian literature owes much to the generosity and foresight of Patrick White, whose philanthropic legacy continues to shape our cultural landscape. For over 50 years, the Patrick White Literary Award has honoured writers such as David Brooks, demonstrating the lasting power of giving to inspire, support, and celebrate creative excellence. Congratulations to David on this remarkable achievement."

Brooks will be officially honoured for his contribution to Australian literature at the Patrick White Literary Award celebration, held at Gleebooks, 49 Glebe Point Road, Glebe NSW 2037, on Monday 10 November 2025, starting 6:00pm for 6:30pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend. To RSVP, please visit https://gleebooks.com.au/event/patrick-white-literary-award-2025/

The 2025 judging panel comprised Prof Sarah Holland-Batt (Chair), Sophie Cunningham AM and Prof Elizabeth McMahon.

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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 52 recipients who have so far benefited from Patrick White's generosity and vision. Past winners include Christina Stead, Fay Zwicky, Elizabeth Harrower, Amanda Lohrey, Tony Birch, Samuel Wagan Watson, Gregory Day and Alex Skovron.

The members of the judging committee are Prof Sarah Holland-Batt (Chair), Sophie Cunningham AM and Prof Elizabeth McMahon.

About David Brooks and his work: The Judging Committee's citation

The winner of the 2025 Patrick White Award is David Brooks.

Born in 1953 in Canberra, David Brooks spent his childhood in Greece and Yugoslavia before returning to Australia, where he was educated at ANU. He studied his MA and doctorate at the University of Toronto and published his early poems in the United States and Canada before returning to Australia to take up teaching posts at a range of institutions including the Royal Military College at Duntroon, the University of Western Australia, ANU, and the University of Sydney, where he taught Australian Literature and contributed mentorship to generations of young writers and scholars until his retirement in 2013.

Brooks's output is prodigious and spans an impressive array of literary forms, but marked throughout by a strong interest in environmentalism, an ethical engagement with the Australian landscape, and a concern for the lives and rights of animals. Across the many genres he works in, Brooks brings a distinctive and cohesive approach, characterised by the coexistence of multiple registers simultaneously, including the social, political, personal, philosophical and poetic. Brooks is the author of six volumes of poetry, four novels, four volumes of short stories, and four works of ecocritical nonfiction that deal with the relationship between the human and animal worlds and our ethical obligations to our fellow creatures: *The Grass Library, Animal Dreams, Derrida's Breakfast*, and *Turin: Approaching Animals.* Renowned American philosopher Jeffrey Masson writes that Brooks's own poetry "showed me how the topic could be most deeply addressed in words, not, as it turns out, by argument, but by poems." Brooks has also made prominent contributions to policy discussions and philosophical discourse as an animal rights advocate.

From his earliest poems in *The Cold Front* (1983) to his most recent volume *The Other Side of Daylight: New and Selected Poems* (2024), Brooks's distinctive poetic corpus is shaped by an intense attentiveness to the natural world, a fierce environmental politics including a staunch allegiance to his fellow animals, and a celebration of the carnal and corporeal, coupled with a speaking position that is self-aware and self-scrutinising, aware of both the limitations and seductions of poetry. As the poet writes in "The Lyrebird," from his second volume, *Walking to Point Clear,* "I wonder what part of the self it is / hides among language." Martin Duwell has noted the ways in which the elegant and at times ecstatic lyricism of Brooks's earliest poetry opens out into a more "free-wheeling personal style" that has produced a wonderfully varied corpus, ranging from the quietly excoriating poems of *Urban Elegies,* the sensuous love poems of *The Balcony,* and the masterful poems in *The Peanut Vendor*—the new body of work within *The Other Side of Daylight*—which are alternately mournful, resigned, allusive, elliptical and direct. A masterful image-maker who is always in complete command of line and form, Brooks's body of work is driven by a deep intelligence, a restive imagination, and a seeming urge to always want to make each poem wholly new.

When Brooks's *The Book of Sei* was published in 1985 it was heralded in the *National Times* as the most impressive debut in Australian short fiction since Peter Carey's, and over the years his work has been widely appreciated by peers and critics, including recognition of his 2007 novel *The Fern Tattoo* with a shortlisting for the Miles Franklin Award. Words used to describe his work have included magnificent, eclectic and eccentric. These words reach for one of the defining qualities of Brooks's fiction: its capacity to take the reader into uncanny, dream-like spaces; geographic, emotional and otherwise. Time itself changes quality. When reviewing the short story collection, *Sheep and the Diva* (1990) one reviewer commented that Brooks's writing slows down the process of reading and draws attention to the act of writing itself. This is true and one of the glorious paradoxes of Brooks's work is the ways in which it is both deeply intellectual

(grappling with contemporary theories of language and history) and of the body. His prose is precise, vivid and sensual.

Brooks has also served his field extensively in leadership roles at periodicals such as *Southerly, Westerly, Helix* and *New Poetry*, and as an adviser, organiser and director of many literary organisations including Sydney Writers Festival, the NSW Writers Centre, and the Eleanor Dark Foundation. He has translated and edited the works of poets from Australia and abroad, and written extensively as a columnist and critic. In his editorial work, Brooks has been an adamant champion of literary diversity, publishing works ranging from the avant garde and experimental to the lyrical and traditional, inviting conversation between different schools of writing, and fostering a true literary ecosystem where all voices and perspectives have found their place.

Brooks's contributions to Australian literature have been profound, but perhaps because his oeuvre has been spread across so many different forms and genres—each with its own audience—his output has not always been readily appreciated in its totality. The Patrick White Literary Award is a hugely deserving recognition of David Brooks as an outstanding Australian writer, thinker, scholar, educator who has had a major influence on contemporary poetry and environmental thought. The judges hope that recognising Brooks's work with this honour will encourage more readers and writers to his stellar body of work, and thank him for his gifts to Australian writing.

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers of philanthropic funds, with $3.9 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds (as at 30 June 2025). Perpetual is trustee for over 1100 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 $128 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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