

MEDIA RELEASE

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2021 Miles Franklin Literary Award Shortlist Unveiled

Today, the Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund, alongside award trustee Perpetual, announced the 2021 Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist, featuring six books by a mix of debut, early career and established authors, all reflecting the rich and diverse fabric of Australia’s cultural landscape.

The announcement was held at the State Library of NSW, and streamed LIVE, which was well supported nationally by Australian readers.

The 2021 Miles Franklin Literary Award shortlist is:

- ***Amnesty* by Aravind Adiga (Pan Macmillan):** Danny – Dhananjaya Rajaratnam – is an illegal immigrant in Sydney having fled Sri Lanka. For three years he’s been trying to create a new identity for himself, but then one morning he learns a female client of his has been murdered. Should Danny come forward with knowledge he has about the crime and risk getting deported, or saying nothing? Over the course of a single day he must wrestle with his conscience and decide if a person without rights still has responsibilities.
- ***The Rain Heron* by Robbie Arnott (Text Publishing):** Robbie Arnott’s second novel is equal parts horror and wonder, and utterly gripping. Ren lives alone on the remote frontier of a country devastated by a coup. High on the forested slopes, she survives by hunting and trading – and forgetting. But when a young soldier comes to the mountains in search of a local myth, Ren is inexorably drawn into an impossible mission.
- ***At the Edge of the Solid World* by Daniel Davis Wood (Brio Books):** In a village in the Swiss Alps, a husband and wife find their lives breaking apart following the death of their firstborn. On the other side of the world, in their hometown of Sydney, a man commits an act of shocking violence that captures international attention. As the husband recognises signs of his own grief in both the survivors and the perpetrator, his fixation on the case feeds into insomnia, trauma and an obsession with the terms on which we give value to human lives.
- ***The Labyrinth* by Amanda Lohrey (Text Publishing):** This deeply meditative book follows Erica Marsden, who, in a state of grief, retreats to a quiet hamlet near the prison where her son, an artist, has been imprisoned for homicidal negligence. Living in a rundown shack, she obsesses over creating a labyrinth by the ocean. To build it, Erica will need the help of strangers. This is a hypnotic story of guilt and denial as well as a meditation on how art can be both ruthlessly destructive and restorative.
- ***Lucky’s* by Andrew Pippas (Pan Macmillan):** The book centres around Lucky, a second-generation Chicago-born clarinet-playing Greek man who finds himself in wartime Australia in the ’40s, escaping service by impersonating “king of swing” Benny Goodman. Lucky comes into money through personal tragedy and uses it to run a successful franchise of cafe diners. Spanning decades, this unforgettable epic tells a story about lives bound together by the pursuit of love, family, and new beginnings.
- ***The Inland Sea* by Madeleine Watts (Pushkin Press):** This debut novel is about coming of age in a dying world and exploring our capacity for harming ourselves, each other and the world around us. Facing the open wilderness of adulthood, our young narrator finds that the world around her is coming undone. She works part-time as an emergency dispatch operator, tracking the fires and floods that rage across Australia during an increasingly unstable year. Drinking heavily, sleeping with strangers, she finds herself wandering Sydney’s streets late at night as she navigates a troubled affair with an ex-lover. Reckless and adrift, she begins to contemplate leaving.

“In various ways each of this year’s shortlisted books investigate destructive loss: of loved ones, freedom, self and the environment. There is, of course, beauty and joy to be found, and decency and hope, largely through the embrace of community but, as the shortlist reminds us, often community is no match for more powerful forces,” said Richard Neville, State Library of NSW Mitchell Librarian and Chair of the judging panel.

Mr Neville is joined on the judging panel by book critic Dr Melinda Harvey, author and literary critic Dr Bernadette Brennan, book critic Dr James Ley and author and activist Sisonke Msimang.

The Copyright Agency’s CEO, Adam Suckling, said, “The Copyright Agency is once again proud to be showcasing the vibrant voices of some of the country’s newest and most talented authors. This year’s announcement was both live and streamed online as part of our ongoing support of, and investment in, Australia’s creative writing industry. The inclusion of the online event gives greater access to those who inspire and challenge our views of Australian life while widely celebrating the authors’ dedication in bringing these stories to life.”

Each of the 2021 shortlisted authors will receive \$5,000 from the Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund.

The 2021 winner, to be announced on 15 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’.

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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 \$1.24 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

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