

# State Library of South Australia

## Media Release



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### 2024 SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LITERARY AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

South Australian author, Shannon Burns, has taken out the state's highest literary honour in the 2024 South Australian Literary Awards for his powerful debut memoir *Childhood*.

The awards presented by the State Library of South Australia were announced on Tuesday 15 October 2024 at a ceremony in the iconic Mortlock Chamber with the Hon Peter Malinauskas MP, Premier of South Australia among distinguished guests.

Minister for Arts Andrea Michaels MP presented Burns with the coveted Premier's Award for the best overall published work on behalf of the South Australian Government.

Also taking out the national Non-Fiction Award, Shannon's memoir vividly recounts his troubled early years in Adelaide's northern suburbs, which judges described as a stunning debut memoir.

"The book is startlingly intelligent, written with sophisticated prose, and deeply evokes its place and time. *Childhood* stood out as the overall winner against a highly competitive group of winners of their forms and genres as a masterful literary accomplishment that utterly succeeded in concept and execution."

This year's new-look awards attracted a record 827 entries from across Australia, with 46 writers shortlisted by independent judging panels across six national categories, including the flagship Premier's Award, and five South Australian categories, with a total prize pool of \$167,500.

State Library of South Australia Director Geoff Stempel offered his congratulations to all winners and shortlisted finalists in the 2024 South Australian Literary Awards.

"As the custodian of stories, the State Library of South Australia is delighted to manage and host the awards and proud to celebrate the diverse writing culture and talents of all our shortlisted finalists and winners. I congratulate the authors and writers awarded with this prestigious literary honour."

Arts Minister Andrea Michaels MP said, "The Malinauskas Government is committed to supporting South Australian authors and we wish to extend our congratulations to all shortlisted finalists and winners.

"South Australia is renowned for its brilliant creative minds and the South Australian Literary Awards provides a boost to authors to propel their literature careers."

In other key categories at the awards, the Fiction Award went to artist, writer and curator, SJ Norman for *Permafrost* for a collection of short stories that explore the shifting spaces of desire, loss and longing. Judges described the writing as affecting, eerie and unique, painting a visual understanding that draws the audience in and stays with them long after they've turned the last page.

The Young Fiction Award went to Biffy James for *Completely Normal (and Other Lies)*, a beautifully crafted novel that speaks to the here and now of young people's experiences in a sophisticated and layered way.

Tristan Banks took out the Children's Literature Award for *Scar Town*, a suspense-thriller mystery that hooks readers from the first page.

Gavin Yuan Gao was awarded the John Bray Poetry Award for their collection *At The Altar of Touch*, a brave exploration of gender and identity, grief and loss, characterised by breathtaking imagery and beautiful use of language.

This year's South Australian Fellowships were awarded to Alexis West for *Monologues, Poems and Ramblings for You, Them, Us... and Me...*, Molly Murn for *Radiance: A State of Being* and James A Cooper for *The Children of Elphinstone*.

Local writer and director Melissa-Kelly Franklin won the Jill Blewett Playwright's Award for her most recent play *Paradise Lost*. The winner of the Arts South Australia Wakefield Press Unpublished Manuscript Award is South Australian writer, Lyn Dickens for her work, *Salt Upon the Water*.

Winners in the 2024 South Australian Literary Awards include:

#### **National Awards**

- **Premier's Award** (\$25,000)  
**Winner:** *Childhood* by South Australian Shannon Burns (Text Publishing)
- **Fiction Award** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *Permafrost* by SJ Norman (University of Queensland Press)
- **Non-Fiction Award** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *Childhood* by South Australian Shannon Burns (Text Publishing)
- **Young Adult Fiction Award** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *Completely Normal (and Other Lies)* by Biffy James (Hardie Grant Publishing)
- **Children's Literature Award** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *Scar Town* by Tristan Bancks (Penguin Random House Australia)
- **John Bray Poetry Award** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *At the Altar of Touch* by Gavin Yuan Gao (University of Queensland Press)

## South Australian Awards and Fellowships

- **Jill Blewett Playwright's Award** (\$12,500)  
**Winner:** *Paradise Lost* by Melissa-Kelly Franklin
- **Arts South Australia Wakefield Press Unpublished Manuscript Award** (\$10,000)  
**Winner:** *Salt Upon the Water* by Lyn Dickens  
**Highly commended:** *Dear Vincent* by Heather Taylor Johnson
- **Tangkanungku Pintyanthi Fellowship** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *Monologues, Poems and Ramblings for You, Them, Us... and Me...* by Alexis West
- **Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *Radiance: A State of Being* by Molly Murn  
**Highly commended:** *A Life Half Lived* by Karen Wyld
- **Max Fatchen Fellowship** (\$15,000)  
**Winner:** *The Children of Elphinstone* by James A Cooper

The South Australian Literary Awards are presented by the State Library of South Australia and supported by the Government of South Australia through Arts South Australia.

For more information, please visit [saliteraryawards.com.au](http://saliteraryawards.com.au)

### About the State Library of South Australia

The State Library of South Australia is the largest public research library in the state and among the most iconic cultural institutions in South Australia. It is home to the historic Mortlock Wing which is consistently voted among the most beautiful libraries in the world.

As custodians of South Australian stories, the State Library of South Australia welcomes over half a million visitors a year and plays a significant role in collecting, preserving and making accessible the State's history for current and future generations to enjoy, experience and learn from.

Open 7 days a week, the State Library of South Australia provides 24/7 access that connects people to resources including research and information services. It also hosts events, exhibitions, and curated programs to enrich access to its collections.

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