

THE FOGARTY LITERARY AWARD

Judges Report, May 2025

This year there were 38 eligible entries in the Fogarty Literary Award. These included 16 young adult and new adult fiction manuscripts, 21 works of adult fiction (including 1 sci-fi, 1 crime thriller and 2 horror novels), and 1 verse novel.

The standouts this year were in the young adult and new adult submissions – it was exciting to see the range of talent, originality and breadth of styles and themes within this category (more than a third of entries). This year the list also contained the gothic and romance genres, with perhaps a corresponding drop in the crime genre than from previous years. In the next Fogarty Literary Award, we hope that more writers submit in the new category of verse novels to showcase their talent in a growing genre.

Most notable was the emphasis on the regions this year, especially amongst the shortlisted novels – whether that be in a novel's setting or the authors' current residence or towns of origin. From Kununurra in the Northwest, to Geraldton in the Midwest, Kulin and Kellerberrin in the Wheatbelt, Donnybrook in the Southwest and Walpole/Denmark in the Great Southern, these writers captured both the isolation and sense of community of life in the regions in a way that felt quintessentially Western Australian.

There were two external judges on the panel this year, joining Fremantle Press publishers Georgia Richter and Cate Sutherland. Brooke Dunnell (also a judge in 2023) won the Fogarty Literary Award in 2021 with her novel *The Glass House* and has judged the Premier's Literary Awards. Brooke's most recent novel is *Last Best Chance*. Camila Egusquiza Santa Cruz is Program Coordinator of Writing and Publications at the Centre for Stories.

As the judges read the entries, they found many points of agreement between them, along with particular manuscripts they felt passionate to champion. The judges were unanimous about the shortlist with their selection of four very different stories that remain with the reader long after reading.

Fremantle Press is grateful to the Fogarty Foundation with their provision of significant financial support that allows talented emerging writers access to editorial and publisher expertise, and assists those who are published with further financial support for their work's promotion.

We believe that the shortlisted and highly commended manuscripts exemplify the Fogarty Foundation values of literacy, educational opportunity, and the ripple effect of investing in talented authors who will reach both other aspiring authors and also readers. We look forward to the 2025 shortlisters and winner joining previous alumni – and to their continuing work as ambassadors and advocates of the Fogarty values.

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Highly commended

The judges highly commend the following novels for their accomplishment, originality and the quality of their writing:

Kayla Browne's historical fiction novel, ***Dark Red***, takes its inspiration from the poem 'The Highwayman' by Alfred Noyes. Successfully transporting the reader to another time, *Dark Red* is, at its heart, a poignant love story that holds the reader in its grip until the very end.

Patrick Marlborough's novel ***Wagger's Champloo*** packs in all the excitement and unpredictability of a brand-new video game with its crackling pacing, snappy dialogue, and madcap hijinks. Set in 2002, the novel's version of the post-9/11 world verges on the hyperreal through its energetic narration and blending of familiar and invented elements.

Using a musical performance as a structural device, **Elliot Stone's** gothic novel ***Encore***, ***Encore*** follows harpist Rowan's painful and illuminating reunion with his grandparents in tropical Queensland as a cyclone bears down. This accomplished literary work captures the setting and characters in elegantly crafted prose.

The shortlist

Jessica Baker's coming-of-age novel ***Out There, In Here*** is an authentic and refreshing read. Set in Brisbane and northern NSW, the novel tackles themes like consent, male validation, and depression. What begins as a seemingly simple narrative focussed on the lives of two sisters unfolds into a raw, emotionally resonant journey of self. A quiet but powerful story that many young adults will see themselves in.

Jessica Baker (she/her) is a writer based in Kununurra, WA. Her work explores abstract concepts like consent and love, and the intricacies of human emotion. She commenced her career as a journalist in 2020, transitioning into court and crime reporting before moving to the UK and worked as a foreign news reporter until 2024. When Jessica is not writing, she works as a marketing and media officer and spends time exploring the dramatic landscapes of the northwest.

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Seth Malacari's queer YA romance, ***Boy Friends*** is a refreshing and upbeat exploration of first love, self-discovery and reality TV. Set between the Great Southern coastal towns of Denmark and Walpole, the first-person narrative is full of insightful observations and wry self-reflection, charting the highs and lows, and the beauty and pain of forming meaningful bonds and finding your true self in early adulthood.

Seth Malacari (he/they) is a nonbinary trans masculine author and editor living in Dianella, WA. He edited the anthology, *An Unexpected Party* (Fremantle Press, 2023), featuring stories from emerging authors from the LGBTQIA+ community. Their work has been published in various anthologies, including *Head Under Water*, *Ourselves: 100 Micro Memoirs* and *Emergence: SBS Emerging Writers' Competition*. Seth is currently undertaking a creative writing PhD at UWA.

The YA novel *Wreckage* by Serena Moss is striking for its spare style and rendering of small-town life. *Wreckage* is a compelling story based on the reclamation of one character's agency after a life implosion. Moss's YA novel, set in the Wheatbelt town of Kulin, often feels reads like a novel in verse – a stylistic choice of fragmentation in keeping with the subject matter when golden boy Carter Reynolds takes fate into his own hands – and the life of his best mate too.

Serena Moss (she/her) grew up in WA's Wheatbelt, and now lives in Waggrakine, WA, north-east of Geraldton. Her work explores the intersections of grief, disability, and small-town legacy. Serena writes from sheds, servo cafes, and the backseat of her Nan's car while waiting for her between medical appointments. She believes in messy boys, wild girls, and fiction that starts after the worst thing has already happened. *Wreckage* is her debut novel.

Chuckie Raven's queer YA novel ***Glimmers in the Sea Glass*** takes us from the oppressive silence of small towns to the locked wards of a children's hospital, immersing us in the lives of two young protagonists separated by twenty years. This engrossing page-turner pulls the reader deep into the heart-wrenching, heartwarming rollercoaster lives of its characters.

Chuckie Raven (they/them) is a youth worker and craftsperson living in Nollamara, WA. They're the founder and lead of the Perth Pride Shed, Perth's first LGBTQIA+ community shed. They are passionate about protecting queer kids and, through their work with The Freedom Centre, have met many brilliant young minds who give them endless hope for the future. Chuckie writes stories they wished they'd had growing up. Their debut novel *Glimmers in the Sea Glass* is born out of their own queer experience and their family's experience of living in WA's South West.

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Comments from external judges

‘It was a privilege and a joy to join the Fogarty Literary Award judging panel for a second time. I was so impressed by the talent and dedication I saw in this year’s submissions, and I gained valuable insight into what our state’s young writers are capable of and preoccupied by – the light as well as the dark. Being exposed to a range of genres and styles and taking part in discussions with the other judges is great training for my own writing, and I can’t thank Fremantle Press and Fogarty Foundation enough for the experience.’
– Brooke Dunnell

‘Being a judge for the Fogarty Literary Award was a truly rewarding experience. It was a privilege to explore the breadth of talent emerging from Western Australia and to read such a diverse range of compelling stories. The dedication and passion each writer brought to their craft shone through on every page. I’m deeply grateful to Fremantle Press for the opportunity to be part of this.’
– Camila Egusquiza Santa Cruz

Conclusion

The judges congratulate all those who entered the award this year for their achievement in creating a book-length manuscript.

They were delighted by the size of the field this year and the way it speaks to the ability of writers aged 18–35 to produce strong and interesting manuscripts. The state of Western Australian writing is in good health!

The Fogarty Literary Award will be announced on Tuesday 3 June 2025.

Fogarty Literary Award judges

Brooke Dunnell, author

Camila Egusquiza Santa Cruz, Program Coordinator – Writing and Publications, Centre for Stories

Georgia Richter, Adult Fiction and Narrative Non-fiction publisher, Fremantle Press

Cate Sutherland, Children’s Publisher, Fremantle Press

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