



Media release

The Hon Ted Baillieu MP

Premier
Minister for the Arts

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Victoria to offer Australia's richest prize for literature

A revamped Victorian Premier's Literary Awards will make Victoria home to the single most valuable literary prize in Australia.

Announcing the changes today at the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, Premier Ted Baillieu said the centrepiece of the new Victorian Premier's Literary Awards – the Victorian Prize for Literature – will see the overall winner taking home \$125,000, by far the largest prize for a writer in Australia.

"Literature is in Victoria's lifeblood," Mr Baillieu said.

"UNESCO has recognised the importance of literature in this state by granting us the City of Literature title, and this award sends a further clear message about the importance of writers and writing to our society and culture.

"These awards have had bipartisan support since their inauguration by the then Premier the Hon. John Cain in 1985, and the Coalition Government is proud to continue this tradition of honouring and rewarding literary achievement by Australian writers."

The new Victorian Premier's Literary Awards will include five categories for Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry and Writing for Young Adults – each with a prize of \$25,000.

The winners of these categories will be eligible for the major prize of an additional \$100,000.

"This is a clearer and more equitable structure, increasing the prizes for Drama, Poetry and Writing for Young Adults and strengthening the awards in line with recommendations by key stakeholders in the writing, publishing and book selling community," Mr Baillieu said.

The changes boost the overall prize pool from \$180,000 in 2010 to \$225,000 in 2011.

In addition to the main awards, to be presented at a ceremony in September, from 2012 the program will include a \$15,000 award for an Unpublished Manuscript, to be presented as part of the Emerging Writers' Festival in May; and a \$20,000 biennial prize for Indigenous Writing to coincide with Indigenous Literacy Day in September, an increase of \$5,000 from the previous offering.

Mr Baillieu also announced today continued ongoing funding for the Melbourne City of Literature Initiative of \$250,000 a year plus indexation.

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This will secure future funding for the Melbourne Writers' Festival as a premier international literary event, enabling it to build on its great success of recent years.

Funding will also expand the impact of the City of Literature program, boosting literary activity and raising the profile of literature across the State.

Mr Baillieu said the Premier's Literary Awards would continue to be delivered by the Wheeler Centre, which administered the program for the first time in 2010.

"In a short time, the Wheeler Centre has become a mainstay of our literary and cultural scene. As Australia's first centre dedicated to books, writing and ideas they are well placed to deliver these awards on the Coalition Government's behalf."

Entries for the 2011 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards open on Monday 18th April 2011.

For details go to www.wheelercentre.com

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