



Australian Society of Authors

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**The Australia Council's
Emerging Writers / Illustrators Initiative Grants
Assessment Meeting Report**

Grants \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000

Eligibility

Applicants had to have achieved any of the following publication/performance requirements:

- 10 short works of fiction or literary non-fiction in professional literary journals, anthologies, general national magazines or major newspapers
- 10 prose pieces professionally performed (eg radio readings, live performances)
- 25 different poems in professional literary journals, anthologies, general national magazines or major newspapers
- 15 different articles (minimum 1000 words each) in general national magazines or major newspapers
- Two playscripts workshopped or one short play performed
- Two substantial scripts (minimum 15 minutes of original text per script) or six short scripts (minimum three minutes of original text per script) broadcast on radio
- Two children's picture books or two children's books not exceeding 20,000 words published by a professional publisher with national distribution
- Three comic books, three issues in a comic book series or three zines published by professional publisher or self-published with national distribution
- A combination of the above (such as five short stories and 13 poems)

The publication requirements for comics and zines were developed in consultation with the ASA's graphic novels/comics portfolio holders and approved by Australia Council staff.

Each applicant's eligibility was checked to ensure they met the minimum publication/performance requirements and didn't meet the requirements for Developing or Established writers. Project descriptions were also checked. Many applications were queried. Those that appeared ineligible were given the opportunity to respond.

Support material

Applicants were asked to submit a sample of work in the genre in which they were applying. The sample had to be no more than 10 A4 pages, double spaced, 12 pt type, with margins of at least 2cm.

Assessment panel

The assessment panel comprised Gail Jones (appointed by the Literature Board) and six others selected on the basis of their skills, experience and qualifications across at least two genres.

Gail Jones, NSW (Literature Board – fiction, non-fiction, poetry)
Bernard Cohen, NSW (New Media, YA, fiction, children's)
Jennifer Compton, Vic (poetry, writing for performance, non-fiction)
Raimondo Cortese, Vic (writing for performance, fiction)
John Harwood, SA (non-fiction, fiction, poetry)
Tohby Riddle, NSW (children's/PBI, graphic novels/comics)
Erica Wagner, Vic (graphic novels/comics, children's/PBI)

Applications

There were 174 eligible applications. Forty-nine were ineligible and another three were withdrawn. The total number of applications (226) was almost four times as high as the Literature Board received last year in the Emerging writers category (58).

Eligible applications by genre were:

Fiction 66
Literary Non-Fiction 33
Poetry 14
Writing for Performance 16
Graphic Novels/Comics 10
Young Adult 15
Children's/PBI 18
New Media 2

Assessment process

Applications were read and assessed against the Literature Board's existing selection criteria:

1. The creative substance of the project; and
2. Ability to engage the reader/intended audience as demonstrated by the sample; and
3. Literary merit (writing ability, focusing on style, appropriateness of form, skilled use of language, clarity of expression and sustained development of themes or ideas), as evidenced by the sample.

Applications were assessed at a full-day meeting held in Sydney on Wednesday, 9 September 2009.

Dr Jeremy Fisher, ASA Executive Director, convened the meeting, but did not participate in assessments.

There was no pre-reading.

Each assessor assessed applications in their nominated genres. Assessors did not read applications where they had a conflict of interest, or where a conflict of interest might be perceived. A conflicts of interest register was kept.

Assessors initialled each application they assessed and marked it Yes, No or Maybe.

If two assessors marked an application Yes, it was short-listed. If one assessor marked it Yes and the second marked it Maybe or No, a third assessor read the application.

Eleven applications were marked Yes by both assessors. After reading by a third assessor, three applications initially marked Yes and Maybe were short-listed. The total requested in these fourteen applications amounted to \$170,000. These applications were selected. There were no contentious issues.

Successful applications

Au, Jessica Jian-Mei (Vic) Fiction \$15,000
Byrne, Madeline Louise (Vic) Non-fiction \$15,000
Christian, Claire (Qld) Writing for performance \$10,000
Grant, Patrick (Vic) Graphic novel \$15,000
Hoyle Nairn, Patricia (NSW) Children's \$5,000
Hunt, Julie Wyn (Tas) Children's/Graphic Novel \$10,000
Jones, Dave (Vic) Graphic novel \$15,000
Lorange, Astrid Patricia Magee (NSW) New Media/Poetry \$10,000
Motion, Derek Scott (NSW) Poetry \$15,000
Rowe, Josephine Mia (Vic) Fiction \$10,000
Stuart, James Allen Anh-Binh (NSW) Poetry \$15,000
Taylor, Tom (Vic) Graphic novel \$15,000
Taylor, Venetia Madeleine (NSW) Writing for performance \$10,000
White, Anne Marie (Vic) Children's/PBI \$10,000
TOTAL \$170,000

The Literature Board ratified the assessment panel's decisions at its September meeting.

Evaluation

The ASA plans to evaluate the program in November, after the results are advised. Applicants will be asked to complete a web-based survey aimed at identifying any problems with the guidelines and application form, gauging their satisfaction with the program's administration (response times etc), how they think the program's administration could be improved and whether, as a result of their experience, they're more or less likely to join the ASA or, if they're existing members, whether they're more or less likely to renew their membership as a result of their experience.