



NATIONAL
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FOR AUSTRALIAN
WOMEN

MARIAN ELDRIDGE AWARD 2009

The competition this year saw 126 applications, by far the highest number ever received. Entrants came from all states and territories, with NSW (56) and Victoria (45) dominating. There were 14 from Queensland, 3 from Western Australia, 2 from each of South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT and 1 from Tasmania. There was 1 which was not eligible as it was from a woman resident outside Australia in Vietnam, and 4 others were excluded for not following the guidelines.

The panel of assessors commented that they found the standard overall higher than in recent years. There was a wide range of forms, themes and subjects. Applicants submitted extracts from novels, short stories and this year there was a good deal of poetry. Entries included a play, the first ever film script and non fiction of various kinds. The selection panel had commented in 2008 that it was relatively easy to write moderately successful verse but very hard to produce verse that was truly excellent. Last year no entrant was commended for poetry, whereas this year the panel commented on the much greater sophistication of the poetry entered, and poetry features in the commended work.

Assessors again noted some impressive writing in the third person voice, and a greater ability for writers to detach from the confessional voice and the limits of autobiographical writing. There was more political writing this year, and evidence of looking outward beyond an Australian frame of reference. Many applicants had had some publications, particularly in journals, and were clearly showing persistence and dedication.

Six applicants were selected as the leaders in this large high quality field, and of these one was assessed as the winner, one was highly commended and four commended.

**Award winner (Jewelene Barrile from Brunswick Victoria) Work submitted:
Chapter 1 from a novel *Find Me***

The panel thought that this was a wonderful depiction of an unhappy family. They commented on the telling idea of a triangle shifting to a rhomboid; the lovely integration of quotes from Maurice Sendak and the effective echo of his book *Where the Wild Things Are*. They thought the characterisations beautiful, and all found that the story strongly held the reader's attention, and all felt keen to read more of it.

**Highly commended (Jillian Pattinson from West Footscray, Victoria) Work
submitted: Extracts from a first collection of poetry titled *Grist***

The panel considered that this writer could truly call herself a poet. The writing ranged widely in its language, its themes and its references. They thought it elegant, sophisticated and confident



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Commended (Natalie Sprite from Rapid Creek, Northern Territory) Work submitted: Extract from a memoir *Ripe*

The panel liked the memoir style that employed all the skill of a fiction writer. The writer showed very good descriptive powers for example in conveying the character of the 'ungentle' aunt. The depiction of the relationship between the pregnant narrator and her partner was highly effectively done, conveyed in a few lines. The work showed great heart, but was never sentimental.

The assessors also commented on the beautifully written covering letter which each had read after having read the writing submitted.

Commended (Ali Eckermann from Koolunga, South Australia) Work submitted: Four poems

One piece in this entry stood out and warranted the commendation: this was the poem on intervention payday. It was impressively written from a male view point. It was dramatic and unfolded in a logical way. It was striking and powerful writing, and because it could be read as an apology for male violence makes the reader re-think attitudes to race relations.

Commended (Kathleen Epelde from Alice Springs, Northern Territory) Work submitted: Extract from a memoir *Thicker than Water*

The panel thought this beautiful writing of great clarity. It was a memoir, a non-fiction voice, showing great powers of story telling. The writer integrated the story very well with the facts of Basque history, and effectively portrayed the tensions and difficulty of being an immigrant community. Complexity was well conveyed, and there was good foreshadowing of what might come in the story. Reading this piece opened a world about which one knew nothing.

Commended (Jenni Nixon from Balmain, NSW) Work submitted: Three poems and extract from short fiction

The panel found this poetry political, brave and feisty. It was urban and contemporary but included humour as well. A strong polemic position was expressed in writing that was powerful and effective.

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