

MEDIA RELEASE

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WINNERS ANNOUNCED INDIE BOOK AWARDS 2021

For the best Australian books of 2020

Celebrating the best Australian writing

Online Awards Night: Monday 22 March 2021

Australian independent booksellers are thrilled to announce *The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Pip Williams (Affirm Press) as their favourite book from last year, and the winner of **The Indie Book Awards 2021 Book of the Year**. Bookseller judge Katherine Downey (from The Leaf Bookshop) commented on William's novel: "Exceptionally satisfying. Williams transports us to nineteenth century England with confidence and panache and to the workings of the scriptorium with an attention to detail that reveals the depth of her research. The fight for women's rights informs this novel and the author's ability to present an array of different female characters, of diverse backgrounds, ages and expectations leads to a rich and layered narrative that is superbly composed."

Early this year* **Affirm Press** reported a bestselling milestone: *The Dictionary of Lost Words* had reached sales of over 100,000 copies across its two formats in the 41 weeks since publication in March 2020. The only Australian fiction title to reach this milestone in fewer than 41 weeks is *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* (Heather Morris, Echo) at 37 weeks, while *Boy Swallows Universe* (Trent Dalton, Fourth Estate) took 48 weeks.

*source, *Books + Publishing*, 18 January 2021

On winning the Award, Pip Williams said:

"I am overjoyed that *The Dictionary of Lost Words* is the winner of the Indie Book Awards 2021 Book of the Year, and I'd like to say why.

The Dictionary of Lost Words was published just days into Australia's first pandemic lockdown. The timing was awful for a debut novel and I lowered all expectations that my book would find its tribe of readers. But then something wonderful happened – independent booksellers refused to shut up shop. While their doors might have been closed, they found myriad ways to get books into the hands of people who would enjoy them, perhaps even need them, during the long weeks of isolation. As a reader and a writer, I was enormously grateful.

Australian independent booksellers helped my novel thrive at a time when it seemed least likely. If I were in the business of giving out awards for outstanding achievement in 2020, independent booksellers would be at the top of the list. For this reason, it is a particularly special honour that *The Dictionary of Lost Words* has been chosen as the 2021 Indie Book of the Year."

Pip Williams Publisher, Martin Hughes (Affirm Press) said:

“This book brought so much comfort to so many during 2020, and it’s especially pleasing that it warmed the cockles of independent booksellers, the heart of Australian publishing, during such a difficult year.”

The Awards recognise and celebrate indie booksellers as the number one supporters of Australian authors. What makes our Indies uniquely placed to judge and recommend the best Aussie books of the past year to their customers and readers, is their incredible passion and knowledge, their contribution to the cultural diversity of the Australian reading public by recommending books beyond the big brands, and their love of quality writing.

The individual category winners in **Fiction, Debut Fiction, Non-Fiction, Illustrated Non-Fiction, Children’s** and **Young Adult** were also announced. From these six category winners, the independent booksellers selected the best of the best – The 2021 Indie Book of the Year.

The Category Winners of the 2021 Indie Book Awards:

OVERALL WINNER: BOOK OF THE YEAR:

The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams (Affirm Press)

FICTION:

Honeybee by Craig Silvey (Allen & Unwin)

NON-FICTION:

Phosphorescence by Julia Baird (Fourth Estate Australia)

DEBUT FICTION:

The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams (Affirm Press)

ILLUSTRATED NON-FICTION:

Plantopedia by Lauren Camilleri & Sophia Kaplan (Smith Street Books)

CHILDREN’S:

The Grandest Bookshop in the World by Amelia Mellor (Affirm Press)

YOUNG ADULT:

This One is Ours by Kate O'Donnell (University of Queensland Press)

The Indies are considered the forerunners of all major Australian book awards. Since the Awards inception in 2008, the Indies have a well-deserved reputation for picking the best of the best in Australian writing. Past Book of the Year winners have gone on to be bestsellers and win other major literary awards. Previous winners include: *There Was Still Love* by Favel Parrett, *Boy Swallows Universe* by Trent Dalton; *Nevermoor* by Jessica Townsend; *The Dry* by Jane Harper; *The Natural Way of Things* by Charlotte Wood; *The Bush* by Don Watson; *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan; *The Light Between Oceans* by M.L. Stedman; *All That I Am* by Anna Funder; *The Happiest Refugee* by Anh Do; *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey; and *Breath* by Tim Winton.

Statements from the 2021 Indie Book Award winners:

"I owe my career to the advocacy of Australia's independent booksellers, and I'm beyond grateful that *Honeybee* has earned such widespread, grassroots support. Readers across the country trust the judgement and expertise and counsel of our independent booksellers, and for very good reason. Being given the Indie Book Award is an extraordinary honour, and I cannot thank Australia's independent booksellers enough for their belief in *Honeybee*."

– **Honeybee** by Craig Silvey (Allen & Unwin)

"Thank you so much for honouring me with this award, it means such a great deal to me. During the pandemic, which gave us a lot of time to pause and reflect on what matters to us, one of the things we all thought about was our local community and how that matters. Independent booksellers were working so hard during that time to get books to people, to get them reading, and to give them things they thought might stimulate them or comfort them. The fact that they considered my book to be something that would do that, means a great deal."

– **Phosphorescence** by Julia Baird (Fourth Estate Australia)

"We are incredibly excited and flattered to win this award and want to send our heartfelt thanks to all the extraordinary independent booksellers not only for their votes but for doing the work that they do to instill a love of reading and discovery in us all."

– **Plantopedia** by Lauren Camilleri & Sophia Kaplan (Smith Street Books)

"How glorious it is that even after a hundred and fifty years, indie books, publishers and booksellers are still thriving in Australia. Thank you, indie booksellers, for championing The Grandest Bookshop in the World and keeping the spirit of Cole's Book Arcade alive!"

– **The Grandest Bookshop in the World** by Amelia Mellor (Affirm Press)

"I'm incredibly honoured that *This One is Ours* is the Indie Book Award's Young Adult winner. Sending a huge thank you to all the booksellers around the country for supporting not only my book, but every book by Australian writers that came out in 2020.

I know it was an impossibly hard year. The shifts I worked at The Younger Sun were the strangest in my entire bookseller life. But watching bookshops adapt creatively and support each other during the pandemic was definitely a 'tiny beautiful' of last year. Indie bookshops are the heartbeat of a community, and I would storm the Bastille for you any day."

– **This One is Ours** by Kate O'Donnell (University of Queensland Press)

The Indie Book Awards would like to gratefully acknowledge the **2021 Awards Sponsors**:

Book of the Year Award sponsored by **Shawline Publishing Group**

Fiction Award sponsored by **Pan Macmillan Australia**

Non-Fiction Award sponsored by **Simon & Schuster Australia**

Debut Fiction Award sponsored by **Affirm Press**

Illustrated Non-Fiction Award sponsored by **Thames & Hudson**

Children's Award sponsored by **Hachette Australia**

Young Adult Award sponsored by **Text Publishing**

The Indie Book Awards are proudly coordinated by Leading Edge Retail.

FOR FURTHER INFO, OR TO REQUEST AN INTERVIEW, PLEASE CONTACT:

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For more info on the Indie Book Awards visit www.indiebookawards.com.au