

PRESS RELEASE

Winners of the 2014 *New England Thunderbolt Prize for Crime Writing* Announced

The New England Writers' Centre is pleased to announce the results of this year's *New England Thunderbolt Prize for Crime Writing*.

The *New England Thunderbolt Prize for Crime Writing* is a national award for unpublished short-form crime writing in three open categories:

Fiction, sponsored by the School of Arts, University of New England;

Non-Fiction, sponsored by The Armidale Express and

Poetry, sponsored by Friends of Tamworth Libraries,

as well as two special awards:

a **New England Award**, sponsored by Readers' Companion and the New England Writers' Centre, and this year

the inaugural **Emerging Author Award**, sponsored by the Armidale Dumaresq Library and Chaucer on Bridge Street, Uralla.

In its second year in 2014, the Prize once again attracted entries from writers from all over Australia and at every stage of their careers.

Fiction was particularly well-represented, with the winners of not only Fiction but Emerging Writers' Award and New England Award coming from that category this year, and Fiction judge Wendy James commenting, *'I was really impressed by the quality of the writing as well as the diversity of style and subject matter in this year's entries for the Fiction category in the Thunderbolt Prize.'*

This quality—and the nationwide recognition that the Thunderbolt Prize has already achieved in just two years—is also reflected in the fact that last year's winner of the Fiction category, **Emma Viskic**, and last year's winner of the Poetry category, **Mark O'Flynn**, both had their winning Thunderbolt Prize entries selected for inclusion this year in a book showcasing award-winning writing.

Winner of the Fiction category in the 2014 Thunderbolt Prize was **Peter Bishop**, from Scone NSW, for his story, *Bushman*. Judge Wendy James commented that the story *'impressed on many levels—the language is polished, the structure works well, the plot is clever and complex without being overly complicated. The suspense is unrelenting, and the reader is hooked from the word go.'*

Highly commended in this category, and also winner of the Emerging Writers' Award, was Frank Davidson from Sydney, whose story, *Grand-da's Stolen Boots*, was described by the judge as *'an utterly charming story, which uses a deceptively simple yarn-like technique to tell a fun and unexpected tale of Thunderbolt... and his ghost.'*

(cont.)

Commended in this category, and also joint winners of the New England Award, were **Catherine McBride**, from Glen Innes, for her story, *Cat and Mouse*, described by Ms James as '*cleverly constructed, well-written and suspenseful,*' and **John Porter**, from Gloucester, whose story, *The Moonlighter*, was praised as '*a wonderfully quirky, modern-day fable.*'

Winner of the Non-Fiction category was **Don Schofield** from the Blue Mountains town of Springwood, for his piece, *Riley the Bushranger*.

Non-Fiction judge Carol Baxter described Don's piece as telling '*an original story about a previously 'unknown' bushranger who roamed and robbed in the New England district in the 1880s, a man who eluded identification, let alone apprehension, for many years.*' Ms Baxter praised the story's '*light, easy-to-read narrative style, and the fact that it was founded on original research.*'

There were no Commended or Highly Commended awards in this category.

In the Poetry category, the award was split this year, with one Highly Commended poem and one Commended poem sharing the award and prize money.

South Australian poet **Jeff Guess** won the award for his poem *The Beekeeper*.

Poetry judge Yve Louis praised this poem about an elderly war criminal, saying: '*The shift from horrendous war crime to forgetful old age is wonderfully achieved by this poet's ability to go much deeper into the human side of a story than the stark bareness of a report may suggest.*'

The other winner in this category was **Bob Wright** from Sydney, whose poem, *The Breaker*, retells—in verse ballad form—the legend of Harry Morant, the Breaker.

Ms Louis commented that the poet, '*...by sticking to a strong narrative line and familiar rhymes, has given readers verse to celebrate and read aloud.*'

The winning entries will be published on [The Armidale Express](#) website.

The New England Writers' Centre wishes to thank all the generous sponsors of the New England Thunderbolt Prize for Crime Writing for helping to make 2014 another successful year for the Prize.