



2025 Judging Panel

GENERAL INFORMATION

The New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa, which governs the [Ockham New Zealand Book Awards](#), is calling for expressions of interest in being a judge of the 2025 Awards from the literature community, and from members of the public with relevant experience. Suitable candidates may include writers, former publishers, editors, festival organisers, academics, curators, teachers, reviewers, critics, booksellers, or librarians. What is important is that they have:

- A deep knowledge and appreciation of New Zealand literature.
- Relevant experience and/or qualifications and a recognised standing in the field of adult literature.
- A wide reading practice, and the capacity to absorb and critically examine a large number of books in a relatively short timeframe.
- For certain categories, a strong appreciation of book design.
- No major conflicts of interest with books in contention.
- The ability and a commitment to work to the timelines required for the 2025 awards judging process.
- The availability to travel as required to at least one judging panel meeting and to the awards ceremony in Auckland.

The Ockham New Zealand Book Awards offer four principal prizes each year: the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction, the Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry, the Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand Award for Illustrated Non-Fiction and the General Non-Fiction Award.

The Judging of each of the four subject categories is undertaken by a panel of three judges with relevant expertise and experience in that subject. One of the three will be appointed as convenor.

Potential judges can either express interest directly or be nominated by members of the literature community and book industry. Individuals who have judged the Awards in prior years, including during the period in which they were known as the Montana New Zealand Book Awards and the NZ Post Book Awards, are welcome to apply after a gap of five years.

Candidates will be selected by a panel made up of members of the New Zealand Book Awards Trust. Once selected, the panels will be well supported by the Awards Administrator.

All judges will be provided with a handbook and guidelines, but discussions are held independently of the Trust and its staff, who take no part in any deliberations apart from determining that all entries meet the criteria for eligibility.

The panel members are required to read all entries in their respective categories and select a longlist of up to 10 books (or 14 in the case of the General Non-Fiction Award) and then a shortlist of four, from which the category winner is decided. Judges also select the book of a debut author in each category to receive a Best First Book Award. The Fiction panel is joined at the shortlist stage by an international judge.

Role of the Judging Panels

Each three-person judging panel has responsibility for:

- Working with the Awards Administrator to meet all judging deadlines.
- Making the final selection of category award longlist and shortlist finalists, and then the category winner (in the case of the fiction panel, with the input of an international judge).
- Making the final selection of winners for the Best First Book awards.
- Contributing to the written overviews for the Awards booklet and website, and category winner citations for Awards night and the website (see below).
- Attending the Awards ceremony.
- Providing written feedback via the convenor to the Awards Administrator about their experience of the judging process, and reflections on points for improvement.

Role of the Convenors of Judges

The convenor of each three-person judging panel has responsibility for:

- Establishing meeting times/venues with their fellow judges and actively working to meet the various judging deadlines.
- Actively guiding the judging process.
- Alerting the Awards Administrator if assistance is required from a te reo Māori advisor to assess bilingual books (written in English and Māori)
- Liaising with the Awards Administrator and Publicist on administration and public relations questions.
- Providing media statements and doing interviews as required.
- Co-ordinating the writing of an 80-word overview of each title for the Awards finalists' booklet and Awards website.
- Co-ordinating the writing of an 80-word overarching comment on the category finalists for media release.
- Writing the 120-word citation (with input from fellow judges) for each category winner, and an 80-word citation for Best First Book winner to be read out during the awards ceremony; and editing those citations as required for the website.
- Delivering the judges' view and decision on stage at the Awards ceremony.
- Providing a comprehensive written report to the Awards Administrator on behalf of their panel about their experience of the judging process, and reflections on points for improvement.

Role of Awards Administrator

It is the Awards Administrator's role to support and assist the judges in the judging process and to ensure deadlines for the judging process are met. While the Awards Administrator may attend judging meetings and brief the judges, they have no involvement in the judging decisions. Judges may call for advice or assistance at any time during the judging process and should direct all communication through the Awards Administrator.

Judging Timeline / Commitment (please note some of these dates may change slightly)

7 August 2024	Entries open.
Early September	2025 judges announced.
Mid-September	First tranche entries (books published 1 Jan – 31 Aug) sent to judges. Judges begin to confer within their panels.
End-October	Second tranche entries (books published 1 Sep – 31 Dec) sent to judges.
Nov-Dec-Jan	Judges continue to confer, and meet in person or by Zoom (as agreed by each panel and within budget provisions for maximum of one in-person meeting in total) to decide longlist.
Mid-January 2025	Deadline for judges to confidentially advise longlist decisions.
End January	Longlist publicly announced. Deadline for judges to confidentially advise shortlist decisions.
Early March	2025 shortlist publicly announced.
End March	Deadline for judges to confidentially advise category winner decisions.
Early April	Deadline for judging panels' citations (for website).
Mid-April	Deadline for judging panels' opening remarks (to be read by convenor at Awards ceremony).
Mid-May	Judges to attend Awards event in Auckland.
Late May	Due date for confidential judges' reports on judging process.

Honoraria & Expenses

Judges receive a full set of books submitted for their category with an honorarium payment of \$1000, or in the case of panel convenors, \$1,250. Travel for attendance at meetings and the Awards ceremony, including accommodation for the night of the ceremony, will be arranged by the Awards Administrator and the costs will be borne by the Trust. Any other reasonable expenses incurred by the judges in connection with their task, such as postage or telephone calls, will be reimbursed.

New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa

The New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa represents the interests of the groups involved in the development of the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, in addition to the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults, and Phantom Billstickers National Poetry Day. The Trust has established the policy and direction for the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, and is committed to ensuring a high public profile for the Awards and associated promotional activities.

Current Members of the NZ Book Awards Trust are:

Publishers Association of New Zealand, Suzy Maddox

Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand, Renée Rowland

Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA), Laura Caygill

New Zealand Society of Authors, Melinda Szymanik

Independent members, Nicola Legat (chair), Rachael King, Richard Pamatatau and Garth Biggs

The Trust is grateful to all those who put their names forward, who by so doing show their commitment to the advancement of quality literature of Aotearoa New Zealand.