

Prize for poetry open for new works on belonging

Entries are now open for Australia's richest prize for a single poem, where Australia's top and emerging poets compete for the \$10,000 first prize.

Now in its 13th year, the ACU Prize for Poetry is open to new works on the theme of Belonging, inspired by a quotation from St Teresa of Kolkata: "If we have no peace, we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

With a winning prize pool of \$18,750, the ACU Prize for Poetry has celebrated some of Australia's best literary minds, including Christine Paice, Judith Beveridge, Mark Tredinnick, and Geoff Page, and launched the career of poet Anna Murchison.

The poems will be blind-judged by literary expert Emeritus Professor Margot Hillel OAM, and scholar and poet Professor Robert H F Carver.

Professor Hillel has high hopes for the 2025 entries.

"This year we are inviting poets from around the country to dwell on the nature and concept of belonging," Professor Hillel said.

"Experts in a range of fields from psychology to theology say the modern world is experiencing a belonging crisis, driven by increasing wars, divisive politics, and a loneliness epidemic. But we also know that community bonds are being strengthened by adversities.

"I look forward to judging the varied interpretations on the theme which will no doubt enhance the already rich collection of poems this prize has received over the past 12 years."

Professor Carver, who has published poems and short stories in Australia, the UK, and the US, said this year's poetry prize was especially significant as Australia looks to appoint its first poet laureate:

"Australia has a remarkably rich and varied tradition of poetry – from Banjo Paterson and John Shaw Neilson, through Kenneth Slessor, A. D. Hope, and Judith Wright, to Les Murray and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (to name only a few). We continue to produce poets of international stature, but the audience for poetry today is far smaller as a percentage of the population than it was a century ago.

"Yet we have never needed poetry more. The rise of generative AI poses an existential threat to our humanity by usurping the functions of language and reason that mark us out as creatures made in the divine image. Poetry is a powerful weapon in the arsenal needed to neutralize that threat.

"I hope that the ACU Prize for Poetry will continue to support Australia's vibrant poetic community, while also attracting and provoking a new generation of writers and readers."

The ACU Prize for Poetry is sponsored by the Office of the Vice President, and follows the Catholic Church's tradition as patron of the arts.

ACU Vice President Fr Anthony Casamento csma said the poetry prize had become one of Australia's most respected competitions, and was particularly popular with writers looking for an outlet for works of a spiritual and religious nature.

"The ACU Prize for Poetry is unique to the Australian literary scene as we encourage writers to explore the crossroads of modern life and spirituality," Fr Casamento said.

"Over the past 12 years we have supported hundreds of Australian poets, both established and emerging writers who feel compelled to express our themes through poetry.

"We have received more than 5000 entries since establishing the prize in 2013 and I look forward to publishing our next collection of poetry later this year."

Entries for the ACU Prize for Poetry open today 1 April 2025 and close Sunday 1 June 2025. Visit the [ACU Prize for Poetry](#) website for full details on how to enter.

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