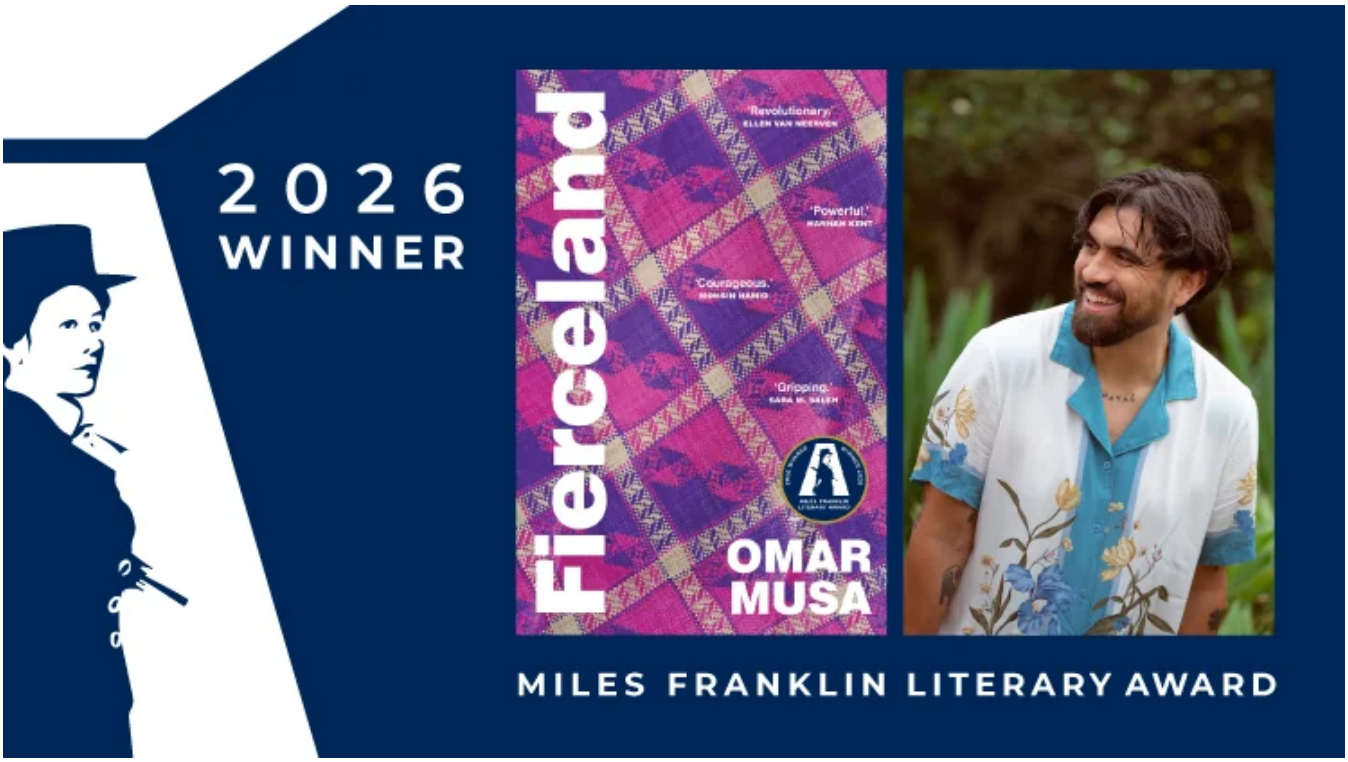
Perpetual

Omar Musa wins Miles Franklin Literary Award

By Perpetual
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Announced today by Perpetual, first-time short-listee Omar Musa has won the 2026 Miles Franklin Literary Award for his novel, Fierceland.

On winning the award, Musa said: “I am honoured, grateful and completely blown away to have won the Miles Franklin Award. It feels strange and wonderful. I worked very hard on Fierceland over many years, but it’s also the culmination of many other people’s feedback and advice. I’d like to thank my family in Malaysian Borneo, my mother Helen, my wife Mariel, my editors Jojo and Jo, my agent Tara, my publisher Nikki and the team at Penguin Random House Australia, my friend Nam, the rivers, the jungle in Borneo with its many faces, and the countless others who enriched me with conversations and spirit.”

Established through the will of My Brilliant Career author, Stella Miles Franklin, for the “advancement, improvement and betterment of Australian literature,” the Miles Franklin Literary Award recognises a novel of “the highest literary merit” that presents “Australian life in any of its phases.” Perpetual serves as Trustee for the Award.

Perpetual Wealth’s Managing Partner, Community, Social and ESG Investment Caitriona Fay, said: “The Miles Franklin Literary Award recognises novels that share the richness of Australian life. In Fierceland, Omar Musa brings a distinct perspective and literary vision that reflects the cultural depth, complexity, and interconnectedness of contemporary Australia. His win affirms the continuing evolution of Australian literature, and the literary tradition that Miles Franklin sought to celebrate, one that embraces new voices, broadens our understanding of Australian experience, and continues to grow in bold and exciting ways.”

Omar will receive $60,000 in prize money.

When describing this year’s winning novel, the judges said, “Omar Musa's Fierceland is a tour de force set against the backdrop of the destruction of Borneo's rainforests. Cleared to make way for palm oil plantations, this pulsing forest world is the moral centre of Fierceland and Musa’s rhythmic prose hums its defiance. In the human drama, siblings Harun and Rozana gradually realise that even in Sydney and Los Angeles, they cannot outrun the fraught legacy of their father, a palm-oil baron in Sabah. As it charts a journey of personal and planetary redemption, Fierceland refashions the venerable, vernacular hikayat traditions of Malay storytelling into new Australian idioms.”

The 2026 judging panel comprises Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian of the State Library of NSW and Chair; literary scholar, A/Prof Jumana Bayeh; literary scholar and translator, Dr Mridula Nath Chakraborty; literary scholar and author, Prof Tony Hughes-d’Aeth; and literary scholar and Director of AustLit, A/Prof Maggie Nolan.

The award was announced at a ceremony in Sydney on 5 August 2026.

The award’s media partner for 2026 is the ABC.

About the Miles Franklin Literary Award www.milesfranklin.com.au

Perpetual is the Trustee for the Miles Franklin Literary Award. The Award was established in 1954 by the estate of *My Brilliant Career* author Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin to celebrate the Australian character and creativity. It supports the betterment of Australian literature by each year recognising the novel of the highest literary merit which presents Australian Life in any of its phases. Since being established, the Award has distributed over $1.54 million in philanthropic funds to authors. Those wishing to be part of the Miles Franklin legacy can donate to the Franklin Support Fund to become a friend of the Award. Please visit the website for further details.

About Perpetual Philanthropic Services

Perpetual is one of Australia's largest managers of philanthropic funds, with $3.6 billion in funds under advice for charitable trusts and endowment funds (as at 31 December 2025). Perpetual is trustee for over 1000 charitable trusts and endowments and provides individuals and families with advice on establishing charitable foundations and structured giving programs. Each year Perpetual distributes more than $123 million to community organisations on behalf of its clients. Perpetual also assists charities and not-for-profit organisations with investment advice and management.

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About the Copyright Agency and Cultural Fund

The Copyright Agency is an Australian not-for-profit organisation that has been standing up for creators for 50 years. We enable the reuse of copyright-protected words and images in return for fair payment to creators. The Cultural Fund is the philanthropic arm of the Copyright Agency, contributing meaningfully to a wide range of Australian cultural, educational, and artistic programs and creators. Through its support it fosters greater appreciation and engagement with Australian writing, publishing and the visual arts in Australia.

Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund is a long-time supporter of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, providing $5,000 to each of the shortlisted authors and granting more than half a million dollars to this premier Australian literary prize since 2004.

About Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC):

ABC is the independent source of Australian conversations, culture and stories, delivering commercial-free, free-to-air screen content via a multiplatform multi-channel network. ABC is the destination of choice for viewers and users seeking quality and diversity in screen content; in particular engaging audiences in

distinctly Australian content across a wide variety of genres. ABC services include ABC, ABC COMEDY, ABC ME, ABC KIDS, ABC NEWS channel, ABC iview and ABC KIDS iview.