



**Darebin
Arts**

In 2021 entrants explored stories about coping with lock down and all that it entailed: stories of resilience, community, connection, struggle and hope. Among them were many heartfelt and touching personal testimonies.

The 2021 Darebin Mayor's Writing Award winner was announced on Wednesday 28 July 2021, at an event held at the Darebin Arts Centre.

For this event, artist Anna Farago created a site-specific installation 'Recollection (Darebin Parklands)' with local florist Mary Learmonth.

Winner (Awarded \$2,000)



Image above: Terry Donnelly reading [Our Plastics Family](#)

Terry Donnelly, [Our Plastics Family](#)

Judge's comments: "First Prize is awarded to [Our Plastics Family](#), a wry, funny and poignant story wrapped in the unassuming form of an email containing a draft speech to be presented to the narrator's co-workers at a plastics company.

"This story was a stand-out in terms of originality of voice and style. It deftly builds a world and a collection of characters – many rendered in just a single well-chosen parenthetical aside – and illuminates both the particular experience of the narrator and the context of his colleagues and the wider community coping with the pandemic.

"The judges were delighted by the complexity and depth of the story, and the writer's exploration of themes ranging from family breakdown to environmental destruction, friendship and community, the significance of one's work and the precariousness of life.

"The writer approaches all of this material from surprising angles with a wonderful lightness of touch, a keen eye for telling detail, and great wit."

Highly commended (Awarded \$500 each)

- Mark Miljons-Rotok's [Thank you Covid](#)
- Kurt Johnson's [Looking up, or what chickens taught me about community](#)



Image above: Kurt Johnson reading Looking up, our what chickens taught me about community

Judges' comments: "The two Highly Commended prizes are both awarded to personal testimonies. Thank You Covid is a fresh and revealing piece

about the writer's experience of being confined in a locked-down nursing home during 2020.

"Written with the humour, heart and well-judged pace of a true raconteur, this story offers an important and insightful perspective on the pandemic experience.

"Looking Up or What Chickens Taught Me About Community is a beautifully written observation of the way a community came together through small personal connections during the pandemic, as illustrated by a neighbourhood competition to name a pair of pet chickens."



Image above: Left to right Cr Susan Rennie, Kurt Johnson, Mayor Cr. Lina Messina, Terry Donnelly and Cr Susanne Newton

About the judges

Emily Brewin

Emily Brewin is a Melbourne author and educator. Her first novel, 'Hello, Goodbye', was published in 2017 and her second, 'Small Blessings', in 2019. Both novels are published by Allen & Unwin.

Her short stories have appeared in a number of anthologies, including 'We'll Stand In That Place and Other Stories' by Margaret River Press and the Bristol Short Story Anthology, Volume 10.

She has written for The Age, Meanjin, Kill Your Darlings, Archer, Feminartsy,

The Victorian Writer and Mamamia. She is currently working on her third adult novel, 'Indie'.

Claire Gaskin

Claire Gaskin has been writing and publishing her poetry extensively for over three decades. 'A Snail in the Ear of the Buddha' was a chapbook published by SOUP Publications in 1998.

She completed her first full-length collection of poetry, 'A bud', in the receipt of an Australia council literature board grant in 2003. 'A bud' was released by John Leonard Press in 2006 and was shortlisted in the John Bray SA Festival Awards for Literature in 2008.

'Paperweight' was published in 2013 by Hunter Publishers. Look at ['Paperweight'](#) on the Hunter Publishers website.

'Eurydice Speaks', Claire's next book, will be released through Hunter Publishers in 2021.

Her fourth full-length collection, called 'Ismene's Survivable Resistance', will be released through Puncher & Wattmann in 2021.

Her poetry has been anthologized in Australian Poetry 2009, Motherlode, Australian Love Poems 2013, Best Australian Poems 2009, 2010, 2013 and in Contemporary Australian Poetry and Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry.

Nicki Greenberg

Nicki Greenberg is an award-winning author and illustrator. Her first picture books, The Digits series, were published when she was fifteen years old. She later spent ten years disguised as a lawyer, while maintaining a not-so-secret 'other life' as a comic artist and children's book author.

Her books include critically acclaimed graphic adaptations of 'The Great Gatsby' and 'Hamlet' (winner, CBCA Picture Book of the Year 2011) as well as a wide variety of picture books and fiction for younger readers. Her latest book is the historical fiction whodunit, 'The Detective's Guide to Ocean Travel'.