



Anita Heiss hosted a special online announcement of the winners of the 2021 Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize during NAIDOC Week.

A celebration of poetry in memory of Naomi

The winners of the 2021 Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize were announced through a special digital event during NAIDOC Week celebrations last week.

Author Anita Heiss, Naomi's cousin, hosted the online event in which she was joined by fellow judges Aunty Sharon Williams (Naomi's mother), Aunty Cheryl Penrith, Amy Williams (Naomi's cousin) and George Newhouse.

"Today we are coming together not only to hear Wiradjuri poetry but to celebrate the life of my beautiful cousin, Naomi Williams," Anita said. "She was a cherished member of our family whose love of writing and poetry now lives on through the Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize, and this is part of her legacy."

"Naomi was a very strong, incredibly proud Wiradjuri woman from the Tumut/Brungle area of NSW, and she loved writing poetry. She wrote about the river, she wrote about her family and she wrote about all elements of love that she treasured."

In submitting their entries, writers and poets were asked to reflect on the theme of Healing Country.

"The quality and the number of entries is quite extraordinary and it's testament to the depth of Wiradjuri literary talent and what healing Country and healing mob means to us as individuals and collectively as a community," Anita said.

Winner in the adult section was Jasmine Williams with her entry, 'Wiradjuri Yinaa'. Highly commended went to Alison Barnes for her poem, 'Ngadhuyungambul Murungidyal'.

Both Jasmine and Alison read their poems through the online event.

Aryssa McAlister was the winner in the youth section, with her entry, 'My mum is black I am not'. Highly commended in this section went to Ngali Williams for her poem, 'Healing Our Culture'.

Brungle Public School students Rikki Penrith, 10, and Jack Barnes, 11, were joint winners in the kids section of the poetry prize. Both children read their winning poems out online.

Jack's entry is titled, 'Winyngamin' (bushfire), while Rikki's is titled, 'Healing our country'.

Highly commended in the kids section went to Lily Sampson for her poem, 'Connection'.

Library scores grant from national cricket fundraising campaign

Gundagai library has been awarded a \$1,500 grant from National Backyard Cricket, a fundraising program established by national charity The LBW Trust.

National Backyard Cricket raises funds for education projects offered in country libraries across Australia and overseas tertiary education. The funds were the result of the inaugural National Backyard Cricket program which was held around Australia over last summer.

In support of country libraries, Harvey Norman have matched the funds raised for libraries enabling the program to support the technology needs of more libraries.

Gundagai Library is one of 54 country libraries across Australia to receive a funding grant.

The library grant-making process was managed by Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA), a national non-profit that represents the 12-million Australians who are members of their local public libraries.

The local library will use the funding to provide education to the surrounding community.

The grant will be pro-

vided in the form of gift cards from Harvey Norman which will enable the purchase of much needed, new equipment.

There were 125 games of backyard cricket played during the National Backyard Cricket campaign, with over 320 donors helping to raise more than \$125,000. The events were supported by cricketers royalty including Justin Langer, Alex Blackwell, Ryan Carters, Russel Arnold, Alyssa Healy, Ed Cowan and Michael Holding.

"This year's National Backyard Cricket day was an opportunity for families and communities across Australia to come together and have fun playing our iconic game after an extremely challenging 12 months, while supporting an important cause at the same time," David Vaux, Chair of The LBW, said.

"We are so thrilled we can support local libraries as we know they have a powerful impact on learning and life outcomes. "Public libraries offer a range of services to their communities including facilitating safe study spaces, holding computer literacy classes, and offering assistance with resumes and cover

letters to help people gain employment.

"There is a particular need for increased funding in rural and regional areas to support this work. We are really pleased we can provide funding to support this work."

Gundagai Library manager Cindy Smith said the local library is delighted to be a recipient of the grant funding and looking forward to the purchase of equipment.

The Learning for a Better World (LBW) Trust has raised nearly \$5 million since its inception 15 years ago. It draws on the generosity of the Australian and international cricketers community to provide transformational educational opportunities for young men and women in the developing world.

Their hope is that, when they graduate, these young men and women will have the opportunity to play an important part in improving the future of their communities and nations.

Over 1300 students from countries including India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania, Indonesia, Kenya and Afghanistan are supported annually.

Council workers can get time off to get COVID jab

More than 45,000 council staff across NSW have been made eligible for special vaccination leave, as local government continue to play a key role in keeping communities safe.

Local Government NSW (LGNNSW) president Linda Scott said the additional leave was part of the special Local Government (COVID-19) Splinter (Interim) Award 2021 secured by the peak body and unions last year.

"Some 105 of the State's councils have opted into this Award,

which makes special vaccination leave available for more than 45,000 council employees," Cr Scott said.

"This new leave allowance allows council staff to get vaccinated without impacting their regular sick leave.

Councils are often the dominant employer in their particular area, so their take-up of the vaccine can play a really important role in helping to keep local communities – their friends, families and neighbours – safe and healthy."

has provided a locally led economic recovery for their communities in the face of multiple crises in the past 18 months, and created new jobs in the process," she said.

"We don't want anything to get in the way of that."

"Ensuring our workforce is vaccinated, where they are eligible, ensures a stronger health and economic recovery for NSW, and keeps our communities safe from the threat of COVID."

"Providing leave to

Experts assemble to support student mental health

Teachers will now have access to the highest quality mental health professional development courses to help them recognise and refer students to the help they need, when they need it.

The NSW Government is assembling a panel of some of Australia's leading experts in mental health to provide ongoing guidance and feedback around NESA-accredited mental health professional development courses for teachers.

Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell announced the new panel, which will include academics, researchers and representatives from each sector including early childhood education to ensure that all mental health professional development courses accredited by NESA meet the highest standards and support the latest evidence-based research in the field.

"The initiative is another positive step towards ensuring teachers are armed with the knowledge and information they need to recognise and refer mental health concerns and assist students and young children with their mental health in mind," Ms Mitchell said

"Schools are not the places where students receive treatment for any major concerns, but they can help recognise symptoms and support students to receive the help they need."

"I want teachers to feel equipped to help their students seek support, and these high quality courses will deliver that, particularly in areas where we know additional support is needed."

Minister for Mental Health and Regional Youth Bronnie Taylor said the courses will help amplify the support in schools and in the community.

"Identifying mental health issues is such a challenge and unfortunately a large number of adults and students who are suffering don't always put their hand up for help," Mrs Taylor said.

"We have a web of support for our students, from School Wellbeing nurses to community services, but it's vital we give our teachers the skills they need to recognise signs of mental illness."

Associate Professor David Hawes from the Child Behaviour Research Clinic at the University of Sydney Brain and Mind Centre

allow our workforce to be vaccinated, and to be redeployed where possible when in isolation, is the right thing to do.

"This latest Award outcome will help councils do their bit in the battle against COVID. It will also help keep our valuable council staff safe."

"For most people, getting the vaccine should be possible within 2-3 hours. Without seeking to infringe on individual circumstances and personal choice, councils will generally be encouraging all staff to get vaccinated," Cr Scott said.

Government implements more bushfire Royal Commission recommendations

The federal government ticked off another recommendation from the Bushfire Royal Commission with the opening of the Australian Climate Service (ACS).

The ACS will support the National Recovery and Resilience Agency and Emergency Management Australia.

The government has now completed 11 out of its 15 recommendations from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disasters.

Emergency Management Minister David Littleproud said the government was sparing no resources to implement all of the recommendations.

"We have demonstrated that we are not sitting back from the task," Minister Littleproud said.

"We are delivering on our commitment and not allowing this Royal Commission's report to sit in the bottom drawer."

"Many of the recommendations require collaboration with different levels of gov-

ernment, non-profits and the private sector, and we have been working hard to get results. The ACS brings together data and scientific expertise from across Commonwealth agencies, including the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Geoscience Australia.

"The information will help to anticipate natural disasters and focus our investment on reducing those risks. "After the Royal Commission's report, we passed the National Emergency Declaration Act, allowing us to leverage Australian Government capabilities in support of state and territory governments during emergencies."

In line with the Royal Commission's recommendations, the government has cut red tape for state governments to gain faster access to disaster recovery packages under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

This includes future call outs of the Australian Defence force, to aid communities recovery needs in times of disaster.

The National Emergency Management Ministers' Meeting is working hard to deliver on priority Royal Commission recommendations for which the Commonwealth and state and territory governments have joint responsibility.

Mr Littleproud said, noting the government has also committed significant resources for disaster recovery and resilience projects.

The \$600m Preparing Australia Program will open in October, to reduce the impacts of natural disasters and increase resilience for households and the community.

The Government has increased annual funding to the National Aerial Firefighting Centre to \$30m and will secure an additional Large Air Tanker to boost our national aerial firefighting capability.

"We have also recently commenced a

is one expert set to join the panel.

"I welcome this initiative and am supportive of any opportunity that gives teachers more evidence-based tools to communicate about and address mental health in the classroom," A/Prof Hawes said.

Also joining the panel is Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist Dr Michael Bowden from NSW Health and Professor Frank Oberklaid AM of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

"It's important that we arming teachers with the confidence and knowledge they need to identify the links between mental health and learning, and to guide them around early intervention where appropriate," Professor Oberklaid said.

Teachers are required to undertake 100 hours of professional development over five years, of which at least 50 hours must be NESA Accredited courses across four new priority areas:

- Student/child mental health,
- School and early childhood curriculum and assessment,
- Students/children with disability,
- and Aboriginal education.

proof-of-concept trial, for a national Public Safety Mobile Broadband communications capability for emergency services. This capability will improve access to critical information and real-time situational awareness during emergencies," Mr Littleproud said.

"In recognition of our Indigenous communities' intimate knowledge of the land, the Government is committed to leveraging Indigenous insights into land and fire management and natural disaster resilience and creating jobs for Indigenous people in this area.

"To better serve our emergency services workers and volunteers on the frontline, the Government has reviewed legislative frameworks to ensure there are adequate employment protections for fire and emergency services volunteers and has spent \$92m from the National Bushfire Recovery Fund on mental health assistance."