

Media Release

The Hon Gavin Jennings MLC
Special Minister of Statement
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Monday, 8 October 2018

THE MADDEST PLACE ON EARTH RECEIVES TOP HISTORY AWARD

A book about the history of mental health during the gold rush in Victoria has been awarded top prize at the Victorian Community History Awards today.

Melbourne clinical psychologist and writer Jill Giese was awarded the Victorian Premier's History Award for her book *The Maddest Place on Earth* in a ceremony at the Arts Centre Melbourne.

In the 19th century, Victoria had the highest rate of what was then referred to as insanity in Australia. Jill Giese's book reveals amid rich historical detail the local explanations for the record number of people being held in the state's asylums, using a brilliant fusion of serious scholarship and imaginative writing.

Other winning entries included the online documentary series *Migrant Stories* from Medea Films, the book *A Secondary Education for All?* by John Andrews and Deborah Towns and the Judges' Special Prize was awarded to Jennifer Bantow and Ros Lewis for their self-published book *Barro-abil* providing the fascinating history of Barrabool sandstone.

Among the commendations were histories about Melbourne Football Club, Alfred Deakin, Pentridge, vagrants and murderesses, and the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria's *Show Girls*. Local area histories also got commended including those for Kilmore, Linton, Yarra Valley, Warrnambool, Ballarat, Lancefield, Castlemaine and Torquay.

The Victorian Community History Awards are presented by Public Record Office Victoria in partnership with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and are funded by the Victorian Government.

A major event of History Week, the annual Victorian Community History Awards recognise the work of individuals and organisations committed to telling stories of local history. This year marked the 20th year of the Awards.

To view commendations and for more information go to www.prov.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings

"It's fantastic to see so many Victorian writers, historians and creatives committed to telling the diverse and varied stories of Victoria's rich history."

"I want to congratulate all of the 11 winners on telling important, informative and engaging local stories that help all Victorians to better understand the past."

Quotes attributable to Public Record Office Director and Keeper of Public Records Justine Heazlewood

"Congratulations to all the winners, including the many volunteers who give up their time and creative energy freely to tell and share stories they are passionate about."

"We share that passion for history with them and are thrilled to be able to award them for their efforts with our VCHA partners the Royal Historical Society of Victoria."

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The 2018 Victorian Community History Award winners:

Victorian Premier's History Award

The Maddest Place on Earth

Jill Giese, published by Australian Scholarly

Judges' Special Prize

Barro-abil Our Beautiful Barrabool Stone: History and Use of Barrabool Sandstone

Jennifer Bantow and Ros Lewis

Collaborative Community Award

'A Secondary Education for All?' A History of State Secondary Schooling in Victoria

John Andrews and Deborah Towns, published by Australian Scholarly

Local History Project Award

Silent Lives: Women of Warrnambool and District 1840-1910

Elizabeth O'Callaghan, published by Warrnambool and District Historical Society

History Publication Award

Granville Stapylton: Australia Felix 1836, Second in Command to Major Mitchell

Gregory C. Eccleston, published by Evandale Publishing

Local History – Small Publication Award

Art Captured: Hans-Wolter von Gruenewaldt, Prisoner of War Camp 13 Murchison: His Story and His Art

Hans-Wolter von Gruenewaldt and Kay Ball, published by the Murchison and District Historical Society

Cultural Diversity Award

Migrant Stories

Stella Dimadis, Medea Films

Multimedia History Award

Secrets from the Mallacoota Bunker

Mallacoota and District Historical Society

Historical Interpretation Award

Wangaratta Stories

Collaborative exhibition by the Wangaratta Historical Society, Wangaratta Art Gallery and Museums Australia (Victoria) Roving Curator Program

Centenary of World War One Award

Lest We Forget: Southern Mitchell Shire Volunteers Who Served in World War One

Grahame Thom and the Kilmore Historical Society

History Article (Peer Reviewed) Award

'The Happiest Time of My Life': Emotive Visitor Books and Early Mission Tourism to Victoria's Aboriginal Reserves

Nikita Vanderbyl, published in *Aboriginal History*

To view commendations and for more information visit prov.vic.gov.au.