

2008 NSW Premier's History Awards Shortlists

State Plan Priority E8: More people participating in the arts and cultural activity.

The NSW Premier's History Awards honour distinguished achievement in history by Australian citizens and permanent residents of Australia. The Awards are worth \$90,000 in total.

The shortlisted titles were chosen from 268 entries.

The winners will be announced at a presentation dinner on Monday 27 October at the Justice and Police Museum. The distinguished Australian author, Nick Jose, will deliver the 2008 History Awards Address.

The judges for the 2008 NSW Premier's History Awards are Rosemary Block, Sean Brawley, Alan Dearn, John McQuilton, Catherine Robinson and Richard Waterhouse.

Judges citations' and full details of the 2008 shortlist are attached.

2008 NSW PREMIER'S HISTORY AWARDS
SHORTLIST

Audio/Visual Prize (\$15,000)

Lorena Allam and Andrei Chabunov	<i>A Question of Trust: stolen wages in Queensland</i>	ABC Radio National, Hindsight
Tom Morton	<i>Our Secret War</i>	ABC Radio National, Social History Unit
Tony Wright, Paul Rudd, Matthew Thomason and Wain Fimeri	<i>Captain Cook: obsession and discovery</i>	Screen Australia National Interest Program, December Films, Cook Films, Ferns Productions, South Pacific Pictures,

Australian History Prize (\$15,000)

James Boyce	<i>Van Diemen's Land</i>	Black Inc.
John Fitzgerald	<i>Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia</i>	University of New South Wales Press Ltd
Paul Ham	<i>Vietnam: the Australian war</i>	HarperCollinsPublishers Australia Pty Ltd

Community and Regional History Prize (\$15,000)

Dianne Johnson, in collaboration with the residents of the Gully and their descendants	<i>Sacred Waters: the story of the Blue Mountains Gully Traditional Owners</i>	Halstead Press
Robert Lee	<i>The Railways of Victoria 1854-2004</i>	Melbourne University Publishing Ltd
Max Solling	<i>Grandeur and Grit: a history of Glebe</i>	Halstead Press

General History Prize (\$15,000)

John Gascoigne	<i>Captain Cook: Voyager between Worlds</i>	Hambleton Continuum: an imprint of Continuum Books
Greg Lockhart	<i>The Minefield: an Australian tragedy in Vietnam</i>	Allen & Unwin
Michael A. McDonnell	<i>The Politics of War: Race, Class and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia</i>	The University of North California Press

John and Patricia Ward History Prize (\$15,000)

Brian H. Fletcher	<i>Magnificent Obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library, Sydney</i>	Allen & Unwin
Jonathan Richards	<i>The Secret War: a true history of Queensland's Native Police</i>	University of Queensland Press

Christina Twomey *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners:
civilians interned by the Japanese in
World War Two* Cambridge University Press

Young People's History Prize (\$15,000)

Krista Bell and David Miller (illus) *Lofty's Mission* Hachette Livre Australia Pty Ltd

Robert Lewis and Tim Gurry *Australians in the Vietnam War* Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd

Matthew Thomason, Paul Rudd and Perry Stapleton *The Prime Ministers' National Treasures* A Screen Australia National Interest Program

**2008 NSW Premier's History Awards Shortlists
JUDGES' CITATIONS**

AUDIO-VISUAL HISTORY PRIZE (\$15,000)

Lorena Allam and Andrei Chabunov
A Question of Trust: stolen wages in Queensland
ABC Radio National, Hindsight

During the Protection era in the last century the Queensland government had far-reaching powers in controlling the lives of Aboriginal people; being legal guardians of their minor children, dictating where they could work, even in many cases directing what they could eat. In 1993 academic Ros Kidd researched thousands of files pertaining to the lives of people under this 'protection' which lasted for seventy years until 1969. During her research she came across evidence of the little known facts of a betrayal of trust by government officials in the matter of wages earned by Aboriginal people. This program includes interviews with Aboriginal women who had been sent into domestic service, their wages immured in their passbooks. They had already suffered separation from their parents who had been sent away to work. One of them, Lesley Williams, pursued verification of her own situation in regard to these 'trust' monies and discovered how unworthy of this trust the government had been. She avers, 'It's about justice and what's owed' and she asks 'Where did all the money go that was sitting in these trust accounts?' The program is lively, interesting and well documented, making judicious use of background sound. The sounds of children playing, the bush, adults in conversation, and music, all contribute to an interesting ambience for the well-presented facts of the case and the lives of those involved.

Tom Morton
Our Secret War
ABC Radio National, Social History Unit

Malaysia and Indonesia were in confrontation in 1965. This situation is carefully explained with useful historical and political background. Australia's involvement in the 'confrontation' was a closely guarded secret from the Australian public and even from the government, with the exception of Prime Minister Menzies and the Minister for Defence, Sir Garfield Barwick. Intertwined with the careful political and historical commentary are interesting interviews with those who participated, including Commanding Officer Lt. Colonel David Thomson. Dangerous incidents in the 'secret war' are recounted. Pat Beale remembers one of the ambush operations and describes the hazardous and exciting mission. Descriptions of the difficult terrain travelled by the troops bent on ambush are augmented with sounds of the jungle, exchange of fire and the clatter of village life, all of which escalate the excitement of the narrative. Because it was so secret and stayed a secret for so long – till 1996 – it is indeed a little known campaign and this program brings it into vivid and fascinating life.

Paul Rudd, Matthew Thomason, Wain Fimeri and Anthony Wright
Captain Cook: obsession and discovery
Film Australia, Cook Films, Ferns Productions, South Pacific Pictures, December Films, ABC

Vanessa Collingridge, the narrator of this TV series, is a Captain James Cook admirer and offers some little known facts about the explorer's life as well as the better-known events of his three voyages to the Pacific. The program creates a fine balance between the role of the narrator, modern interpretations and explanations, contemporary interviews with historians, archivists and cartographers. Both the importance of Cook's discoveries and the obsessive character of the man are investigated. There are interesting psychological

and medical insights and theories. The program removes Cook from the comfort zones customarily created for him and shows him as both a brilliant but flawed and driven man. Collingridge travelled to a number of places where Cook had either lived or visited, connecting the viewer immediately to these areas. A great deal of research has contributed to the success of this four part series so, as well as being absorbingly interesting, it is dependable in its facts.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY PRIZE (\$15,000)

James Boyce
Van Diemen's Land
Black Inc.

This deeply researched and well-written book provides a major re-interpretation of the history of Van Diemen's Land in the early years of European settlement. In describing the emergence of a unique economy based on local resources James Boyce neatly demonstrates how the convicts adjusted and interacted with the environment. Their experience in this new world was not marked by alienation from and hostility to an unfamiliar landscape, but by adaptation and the creative and economic use of its bountiful resources. Carefully collecting and analysing his evidence Boyce also shows how from the 1820s the wholesale appropriation of land, and its conversion to agriculture, and more especially grazing, instigated and marked the beginning of widespread conflict between the colonists and the Indigenous inhabitants. The great merits of this book lie in its recreation of the early economy, its demonstration that adaptation was at the heart of the colony's early culture.

John Fitzgerald
Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia
University of New South Wales Press Ltd

This study of the Chinese in Australia from the goldfields era to near present times convincingly demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between the two cultures as they interacted and influenced each other over the course of one hundred and fifty years. Through a series of case studies John Fitzgerald brings a human dimension to his study, identifying the survival techniques developed by individual Chinese immigrant families, and mapping their contributions to the local and national communities. Fitzgerald shows that the culture that the Chinese colonists brought with them was neither static nor simple. The strengths of this book lie in its persuasive arguments that the culture brought by the Chinese in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was complex and certainly not servile. Fitzgerald argues convincingly for the multifaceted nature of the cultures that the Chinese brought with them and for the development of significant cultural and social ties between them and the Anglo-Celtic majority.

Paul Ham
Vietnam: the Australian war
HarperCollins Publishers Australia Pty Ltd

What distinguishes Paul Ham's book from the many others on the subject is the comprehensive nature of its approach, which encompasses the political and military history of Australia's involvement in Vietnam as well as the domestic social and cultural context. It is a book that tells the human side of the war, with its moving and sometimes tragic stories of the conscripted and enlisted Australian soldiers, as well as of the Vietnamese civilians, soldiers and guerrillas. It is a well-told story of human frailty, of the shortcomings and lack of vision of those political leaders who committed Australian troops

to Vietnam; and of the narrow-minded ideologies that drove some of those who opposed the war. In the end it reveals in damning detail the terrible human and economic costs of the war, while never losing sight of the Australian military achievements in Vietnam, nor of the professionalism and courage of the Australians who fought there. It convincingly demonstrates the important role the Vietnamese War played in shaping Australia's history.

COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL HISTORY PRIZE (\$15,000)

Dianne Johnson, in collaboration with the residents of the Gully and their descendants

***Sacred Waters: the story of the Blue Mountains Gully Traditional Owners*
Halstead Press**

This is a powerful work that combines different approaches in its history of the traditional owners of the Blue Mountains Gully. The prologue sets the scene and themes that are developed throughout the book: community, place, environment, religion, poverty, pride, struggle, denial, dispersal, affirmation, achievement and dignity. Dianne Johnson allows the people to speak for themselves and this produces a rich portrait of a community and the issues it has faced and still faces. A great strength of this book is the way it draws the experiences of Indigenous Australians into one place and one community, giving a national story a very human face and removing the 'gaze' of the public from northern Australia to something far closer to Australia's largest city. Discomfort it holds – but also hope.

Robert Lee

***The Railways of Victoria 1854-2004*
Melbourne University Publishing Ltd**

This book is a history of the railways in Victoria but it is more than what, at first glance, might appear to be a dry topic: it contextualises an institution within its political, economic, social and, finally, heritage contexts. The politics of railway building is a major theme, from the early attempts by private companies to build railways to the government's decision that it could do the job better – and, much later, a reversion to a belief that private enterprise could do better. The social aspect of the railways is one of the strongest elements in the book. There are matters as diverse as the pragmatics of travel to the glamour of travel, matters of departure and reunion, the place of religion and propriety, the famous and infamous and tourism. The book is also a powerful reminder of the economic significance of the railways, initially in opening up new country for settlement and, finally, in tying the rural hinterland to a dominant metropolis. Industrial conflicts, the ultimate 'victory' of road over rail and finally the heritage/nostalgia elements associated with the railways are also part of the social history of the institution. And railway buffs won't be disappointed: the book also covers the technical details dear to their hearts.

Max Solling

***Grandeur and Grit: a history of Glebe*
Halstead Press**

This is a rich social history of one of Sydney's more famous suburbs, Glebe.

After reading this book one has little doubt that Max Solling both knows, and loves, this part of Sydney. His research is solid. The author charts the changing profile of Glebe from glebe to a retreat and village, to a working class suburb and, finally, a gentrified suburb, without losing sight of the fact that Glebe was neither fish nor fowl – it always contained a social mix. The photographs in the book clearly reflect that social mix, from

young men in boaters and blazers to barefoot children in the streets. The capacity to interweave matters as diverse (even dry) as local institutions with individual stories gives life to the history. And the author moves beyond localism, one of the major problems facing community and/or regional history. Glebe is the focus but Glebe is also a point of intersection between local needs and external factors.

GENERAL HISTORY PRIZE (\$15,000)

John Gascoigne

Captain Cook: voyager between worlds

Hambledon Continuum: an imprint of Continuum Books

To bring new and powerful insights to a field of study that has been well traversed for over two hundred years marks *Captain Cook: Voyager Between Worlds* as a work of distinction. Earlier studies of Cook's voyages have tended to see the British sailors' world as the norm from which deviance might be judged. John Gascoigne's powerful social history rejects such an approach and constructs and explains the world-views of not only the peoples of the Pacific but of Cook himself. The effort thus provides a new level of insight into this important cultural encounter in the late eighteenth century. The result of an extended period of academic interest in the subject at hand, *Captain Cook: voyager between worlds* is the product of exhaustive primary research and the author's easy familiarity with an enormous body of secondary literature. Such scholarly credentials, however, do not impinge on the readability of the work. Its structure and style make it a work accessible to a wide audience.

Greg Lockhart

The Minefield: an Australian tragedy in Vietnam

Allen & Unwin

Much Australian military history is pre-occupied with this nation's exceptionalism in the art of war. Long-held and perceived abilities are often exemplified in studies that demonstrate uniqueness in Australian operational approaches. Such an outlook can be seen in the literature of the Vietnam War. It is often suggested that Australia won its Vietnam War because it prosecuted the war in Phuoc Tuy Province in a way that was more responsive to Vietnamese realities and Australian capabilities. In *The Minefield*, academic historian and Vietnam Veteran Greg Lockhart problematises this enduring assumption with the assistance of a most engaging central character: the M-16 'Jumping Jack' anti-personnel mine. More than simply a strategic error, Lockhart explores how the laying of a minefield – that claimed ten percent of Australian battle deaths – reflected broader Australian perceptions of Asia in the post-war era. Supported by wide ranging archival research and oral history, *The Minefield* is a confronting revisionist history that raises some uncomfortable truths about Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Michael A. McDonnell

The Politics of War: race, class and conflict in Revolutionary Virginia

The University of North Carolina Press

A revisionist account that challenges and complicates earlier understandings of American history, *The Politics of War* demonstrates how class and race played their part in shaping the course of Virginian history during the American Revolution. Given the centrality of Washington's home colony to the study of this period, this authoritative account makes an important contribution to broader themes in American history, thereby ensuring its importance within that nation's historiography for many years to come. The research is meticulous, the writing style accessible and engaging. Michael A. McDonnell's book can

stand proudly beside that other important Australian contribution to Virginian and American history, Rhys Isaac's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S HISTORY PRIZE (\$15,000)

Krista Bell and David Miller (illus)

Lofty's Mission

Hachette Livre Australia Pty Ltd

In this delightful picture book, a young boy gives up his favourite racing pigeon, Lofty, to be trained as a carrier pigeon by the Australian army. Lofty's mission takes him from an outer suburb of Melbourne to training in Queensland, before being sent to work for Australian soldiers fighting in New Guinea. The deceptively simple story manages to evoke a rich sense of Australian social history, introducing young readers to the world of the 1940s pigeon enthusiast, to the spectre of polio, and to something of the role played by animals in war. Krista Bell's text is brought to life beautifully through David Miller's distinctive illustrations, which give an authentic glimpse of the world of an Australian family in the 1940s. The simple text is based on strong research, with a glossary explaining some of the technicalities of pigeon training and unfamiliar terms like 'squeaker' and 'tin lizzie'. This is a book that should inspire its readers to find out more, containing as it does tantalising details about such things as the Dickin Medal, awarded to animals for bravery in war, and capturing through Miller's illustrations something of the visual world of the 1940s.

Robert Lewis and Tim Gurry

Australians in the Vietnam War

Ryebuck Media Pty Ltd

This interactive CD-ROM package introduces high school students to the combat experiences of Australians in Vietnam and to the impact the war had on Australian society. The Australian army's approach to pacifying Phuoc Tuy Province is considered through an interactive strategy game, while another module provides a series of interviews by a range of participants in the war. Students are invited to consider how they would have responded to the escalating conflict, and to reconstruct the career of an individual soldier from a range of documents. Robert Lewis and Tim Gurry have succeeded in making creative and effective use of their medium, without compromising the historical information and skills they seek to teach. The source analysis activity is particularly impressive in modelling how historians are able to reconstruct events from different types of evidence. The approach throughout is certain to appeal to digitally savvy teenagers. *Australians in the Vietnam War* is an exemplary resource that sets a high standard for similar digital packages, and will provide the basis for many memorable history lessons.

Matthew Thomason, Paul Rudd and Perry Stapleton

The Prime Ministers' National Treasures

Screen Australia, National Interest Program

William Hughes' conscription badge, Ben Chifley's pipe and Harold Holt's briefcase are some of the simple objects used to tell the story of the men who owned them in this series of ten short documentaries. At just five minutes each in length, the films introduce an object owned by one of Australia's Prime Ministers, using it to give a succinct biography of their owner and to explore some of the key issues with which they were involved. The engaging stories are told by the cartoonist Warren Brown, who enlivens his account with cartoons and brief interviews with historians. For young people expecting a film dealing with Prime Ministers to be dull, this production comes as a revelation. The writers very

successfully humanise their subjects before placing them at the centre of significant events in Australia's history. These short films give tantalising glimpses of their subjects, stimulating interest through stories well told.

JOHN AND PATRICIA WARD HISTORY PRIZE (\$15,000)

Brian H. Fletcher

Magnificent Obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library, Sydney
Allen & Unwin

This fascinating and detailed account of the Mitchell Library up to 1995 opens with an account of David Scott Mitchell's bequest in 1907 of books, manuscripts, maps and pictures pertaining to Australia and the Pacific to the Public Library of New South Wales. Brian Fletcher covers in detail the development of the collection over a period of 88 years and the sometimes unharmonious relationship between the Mitchell Library and its parent organisation, the State Library of New South Wales. Fletcher makes an extensive use of the Library's own archives, private papers and interviews with former and current staff to bring to life the Mitchell Library, its people, the reading room and collections. Context for the development of the Mitchell Library and its collection is provided by linking to the broader prevailing social and economic climates. It is a very readable and engaging history.

Jonathan Richards

The Secret War: a true history of Queensland's Native Police
University of Queensland Press

The Secret War relates the actions of the Native Police, a police force comprised of Indigenous Australians supervised by white European commanders and operating within the commissioned police force in Queensland, and dispatched specifically beyond the 'settled' districts in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is a confronting history of sanctioned dispossession. Historian Henry Reynolds has estimated that at least 10,000 Aboriginal people were killed on the frontier in Queensland. Many of these deaths were the result of racial violence and the actions of the Native Police.

Jonathan Richards has explored a range of archival records to build a rich historical account of the actions of the force. He has made an exhaustive use of records held in state archival authorities to reconstitute forensically the work of the Native Police and to make observations on the group of men who served in the force. The resulting history provides a rich array of examples to explore the theme of dispersal and dispossession of Indigenous Australians, the military culture and background of the force and its commonality with forces in other colonies, and the sanction of violence for the operations of those who operated on the frontier.

Christina Twomey

Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: civilians interned by the Japanese in World War Two
Cambridge University Press

In World War II, 1,500 Australian civilians were captured by the Japanese and interned in camps in Asia and the Pacific. These included missionaries, nurses, Australian Government officials, news reporters, businesspeople, or expatriates who had not been able to flee from advances of the Japanese army. The internment experiences of this group and their repatriation by the Australian Government tend to be forgotten and are not commemorated within the mainstream accounts of World War II. *Australia's Forgotten*

Prisoners uses the diaries and memoirs of civilian internees held at the Australian War Memorial, the Mitchell Library and a number of religious orders, to explore the experiences of this unique group of prisoners of war. Like military POWs, civilians experienced difficulties, deprivations and potential death during internment and Christina Twomey details their experiences through their own words. Unlike military POWs, civilian internees' experiences of repatriation and rehabilitation left bitterness and resentment. Records held at the National Archives of Australia are used to explore the Australian Government's ambivalence to the civilian internees, the failure to provide adequately for the rehabilitation and medical care of interned men, women and children, failure to compensate for lost property and assets, and the Government's continued attempts to seek reimbursement from the internees for the costs of their repatriation.