



George Souris M.P
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

(EMBARGOED 10PM) Monday 5 September 2011

2011 PREMIER'S HISTORY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Stories of multicultural Sydney, gambling in New York City, a string of post-war poisonings, manners in colonial Australia and a troupe of child performers have all featured in winning works at the 2011 NSW Premier's History Awards.

Academics, historians and members of the public have gathered in Sydney tonight (5 September) for a gala dinner and the announcement of the winners of this year's awards worth a total of \$75,000.

Speaking at the event, Arts Minister George Souris said he was delighted that for the first time the awards presentation was being held at CarriageWorks at Eveleigh which has a history dating back to 1880.

"The NSW Premier's History Awards were established to celebrate the work of our living historians," Mr Souris said.

"These historians deserve widespread recognition for dedicating their lives to uncovering aspects of the past which help us understand who we once were, who we are now and who we should be in the future.

"Without their work we would be blind to both our past mistakes and our past triumphs. Consequently, we would be unable to learn from either.

"The NSW Government has an important role in recognising our historians and encouraging their work.

"The annual NSW Premier's History Awards offer a \$15,000 prize for each of five categories, as well as the NSW Archival Research Fellowship (\$15,000) and the NSW History Fellowship (\$20,000)."

The winners of the 2011 NSW Premier's History Awards are:

Young People's History Award

Kirsty Murray - *India Dark* (Allen & Unwin)

Through its two narrators, 15-year-old Tilly Sweetrick and 13-year-old Poesy Swift, this excellent historical novel for teenagers, tells the extraordinary story of a troupe of child performers aged seven to 18 years, touring with Percival's Lilliputian Opera Company through South East Asia and India in the first decade after Federation.

Multimedia History Prize

Sonia Bible - *Recipe for Murder* (Stray Dog Pictures Pty Ltd for Jumping Dog Productions Pty Ltd)

This original, beautifully presented film offers an insightful analysis of the place of women in Sydney society in the postwar period as well as the role of place in

generating unique historical conditions. In particular, it tells the story of three Sydney women who all poisoned members of their immediate families by concealing the rat poison, thallium, in food that they prepared.

NSW Community and Regional History Prize

Stephen Gapps - *Cabrogal to Fairfield City: A History of a Multicultural Community* (Fairfield City Council)

Commissioned by Fairfield City Council, Stephen Gapps has produced a magisterial history of Fairfield, modestly entitled *A History (not The History) of a Multicultural Community*. Despite his modesty, here at last is a study of the contributions and perceptions of all the people of Fairfield. The globalisation of the area, no less than its multiculturalism, is the thematic achievement of this lavishly documented book.

General History Prize

Shane White, Stephen Garton, Stephen Robertson and Graham White - *Playing the Numbers: Gambling in Harlem Between the Wars*

(Harvard University Press)

Telling the story of New York's gaming underworld in the first half of the last century, this is a brilliant work of recuperative cultural history. It has taken a forgotten aspect of New York gambling history, contemptuously dismissed as 'nigger pool', to recreate a complete social underworld – a dynamic, insouciant Black American cultural and urban topography of the streets.

Australian History Prize

Penny Russell - *Savage or Civilised?: Manners in Colonial Australia*

(UNSW Press)

Penny Russell has produced a wonderfully lively, richly textured and important book which is destined to become essential reading for specialists and enthusiasts alike. Without making grand claims that manners mattered for all colonial Australians, Russell convincingly debunks the myth of a ready-made egalitarian society by casting right back to early 'unrehearsed, unpredictable' encounters between the colonisers and the colonised, embodied in the politics of the handshake.

Minister Souris also announced Matthew Allen as the recipient of the \$15,000 2011 NSW Archival Research Fellowship.

"Mr Allen will use the fellowship to investigate the use of summary jurisdiction by the NSW magistracy in the first half of the 19th century.

"I am also pleased to announce the recipient of the 2011 NSW History Fellowship, valued at \$20,000, is Dr Rachel Landers.

"Dr Landers will research and write a documentary film script about the 1978 Hilton Hotel bombing, including why the case remains unsolved.

"I congratulate all tonight's winners on producing historical works which allow us to appreciate and learn from the past."

Mr Souris said it is the first time the Premier's History Awards have been staged during NSW History Week which this year will explore the history of food with nearly 100 events across the State.

Media contact: Norm Lipson 0467 734 679