



Ockham New Zealand Book Awards 2026 - Call for Entries

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Section 1: Introduction to Ockham New Zealand Book Awards

The Ockham New Zealand Book Awards annually recognise excellence in New Zealand books for **adult readers**¹ written in English or te reo Māori.

They are governed and administered by the New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa. Principal sponsors are Ockham Residential, Jann Medlicott and the Acorn Foundation, Creative New Zealand, Mary and Peter Biggs, BookHub presented by Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand, and the Mātātuhi Foundation. The Ockham New Zealand Book Awards partners with the Auckland Writers Festival, which provides administrative support and hosts the awards ceremony as part of its annual programme in May.

Major Awards

Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction	\$65,000
General Non-Fiction Award	\$12,000
BookHub Award for Illustrated Non-Fiction	\$12,000
Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry	\$12,000
Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award	\$12,000

Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award

Books of fiction, non-fiction and poetry that meet the general criteria of those awards and are written wholly and originally in te reo Māori are eligible for Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award of \$12,000, awarded at the discretion of a specially appointed judge.

Mātātuhi Foundation Best First Book Awards

Books submitted for the major annual awards can also be considered for the Mātātuhi Foundation Best First Book Awards:

- Hubert Church Prize for Fiction
- Jessie Mackay Prize for Poetry
- E.H McCormick Prize for General Non-Fiction
- Judith Binney Prize for Illustrated Non-Fiction

Each Mātātuhi Foundation Best First Book category winner will receive \$3,000 and a 12-month membership of the New Zealand Society of Authors.

¹ Books whose primary target readership is children or young adults should be entered in the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults

Section 2: 2026 Awards Dates

Key dates

Submissions open for books published 1 Jan-31 Aug 2025	7 August 2025
Final submission date for books published 1 Jan-31 Aug 2025	3 September 2025
Submissions open for books published 1 Sep-31 Dec 2025	4 September 2025
Final submission date for books published 1 Sep-31 Dec 2025	16 October 2025
Announcement of longlist in each major category	29 January 2026
Announcement of shortlist in each major category	4 March 2026
Ockham New Zealand Book Awards ceremony – all winners announced	13 May 2026

Section 3: 2026 Eligibility Criteria

1. The 2026 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards are open to books published between **1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025**.
Printed books are considered published when first made available for distribution in New Zealand. E-books are considered published when widely available via at least two major online retailers.
2. A printed book must be made available to all booksellers to purchase at usual trade terms (see clause 6 in Section 4), for on-sale to members of the public, and will also be in stock and available for bookstores and the public to purchase should the book be selected as a finalist.
3. E-books must be widely available for purchase online. Major mainstream online e-book retailers are defined as Amazon, Apple iBooks, Google Play and Kobo.
Any e-books submitted for the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction must be made available in printed format within 21 working days of being longlisted. If a printed book submitted for the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize is longlisted, it must be made available for sale as an e-book within 21 working days of its longlisting.
4. Principal authors and illustrators must be New Zealand citizens (by birth, naturalisation, or immigration) or be permanently residing in New Zealand. Evidence of permanent residency is required to confirm that all principal contributors meet this requirement. The work of New Zealand citizens living overseas is eligible if the book meets other criteria (above and below) and has been published by a New Zealand or overseas publisher during the period stipulated for eligibility.
The principal author(s) must be the major contributor(s) of the book being submitted, with at least 50 percent input. Publishers must clearly define the 50 percent of the work which has been written by the principal author(s).
5. Deceased authors' books are not eligible for entry unless the author died after the book's manuscript was submitted to and accepted by its publisher.
6. Works containing AI-authored content, in part or in whole, or AI-generated illustrations, are not eligible for entry in any category of the awards. Use of AI for research, minor editorial, or formatting support may be permitted. If a work is found to include ineligible AI-generated content after submission, it will be disqualified at the submitter's expense. Entry fees will not be refunded and submitted materials will not be returned.
7. Reprints and re-issues of previously published works are not eligible. A new print run of a previously published book, without alteration, is considered a reprint. A new issue of a previously published book, where minimal alteration has been made (e.g. jacket design, format, imprint etc) is considered a reissue.

New editions which contain substantial revision, adding a minimum of 50 percent new content and re-interpretation, are eligible. Where a new edition is submitted, the publisher must supply a copy of the previous edition of the book, with an explanation of the degree of revision. Selections or collections of previously published work by a single author are eligible if they offer a new view of the author's past work, and the new work they contain would meet the criteria for a book in its own right, in the relevant category. **Please note separate eligibility criteria for the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction in terms of previously published material, in clause 10.**

8. Books published with the assistance of grants or subsidies are eligible.
9. Books written in English and books written in te reo Māori, or a mixture of both, are eligible. Where books contain more than 10 percent content in languages other than English or te reo Māori, that material will be discounted from consideration. Books in translation from other languages, either into English or into te reo Māori, are not eligible.
10. In respect of the **Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction**, both short story collections by a single author and novels are eligible. Entries must be original and substantial in length, and in the case of a collection of short stories, should be a unified and coherent collection of which a minimum 30 percent of the content (assessed by word count) must be entirely new and may not have been published previously in any form. The remaining 70 percent may consist of content previously published in a book of short stories by the author, in journals, magazines, in commissioned anthologies, on websites and broadcast. The publisher must supply a breakdown of previous publication of the stories or any parts thereof when submitting collections.
11. In respect of the **Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry**, which includes selections and collections of poetry, entries must contain at least 48 pages. Anthologies of poetry by two or more authors will be eligible if they contain sufficient new work to meet the criteria for a book in its own right.
12. In respect of the **General Non-Fiction Award**, which recognises excellence in primarily text-based non-fiction work, entries must contain 48 pages or more. Books that include the work of two or more authors are eligible, as long as the authors meet the other general criteria for eligibility.
13. In respect of the **BookHub Award for Illustrated Non-Fiction** – which recognises excellence in works that have strong illustrative content in which the substance and impact of the work is either carried primarily by illustrated material with complementary text OR the substance and impact results from the combined strength of illustration and text – entries must contain 48 pages or more. Books that include the work of two or more authors (which may include photographers and/or artists) are eligible, as long as the authors meet the other general criteria for eligibility, and have been involved in shaping the concept, outline and development of the book.
14. In respect of **Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award**, eligible books must be wholly and originally written in te reo Māori and may be written by one or more authors. NB: This award is given at the judge's discretion.
15. The four **Mātātuhi Foundation Best First Book Awards** recognise work of quality by an author for whom the entry is their first published book in any genre, under any name, with the following provisos:
 - a. Previous publication of written work (including extracts or parts of the submitted book) in magazines, newspapers, literary journals, anthologies and other media will not make the author ineligible.
 - b. Previous publication of a book of fiction, poetry or non-fiction of fewer than 48 pages, or a children's book of fewer than 16 pages will not make the author ineligible.
 - c. A contribution by the author of less than 50 percent to a previously published non-fiction book will not make the author ineligible. In the case of a collection of poetry by two or more authors, if a poet's contribution was fewer than 48 pages they are eligible.
 - d. In general, awards will be made to single-authored titles. However, co-authors will be considered eligible where they are both previously unpublished; and multi-authored books where one or

more of the contributors has been published previously will be considered eligible if 75 percent of the book is the work of the unpublished writer.

- e. An editor whose main contribution to a book has been to present others' words and whose writing amounts to less than half of the text of the book is not deemed to be an author for the purposes of the Best First Book awards, and such books will not be eligible for these awards.
 - f. Books written wholly and originally in te reo Māori and submitted for judging for Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language award may also be considered for a Best First Book award.
16. The final decision on the eligibility of any submission rests with the New Zealand Book Awards Trust. No correspondence will be entered into.

Please note:

In completing a submission to the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, responsibility for clarifying the interpretation of eligibility criteria and conditions of entry lies with the publisher.

Where a book is accepted as eligible, and it is subsequently determined that the book is ineligible due to the publisher's misinterpretation of eligibility criteria and/or conditions of entry, and/or failure to disclose relevant information, the publisher will be liable for any associated costs and the entry fee will not be refunded.

Section 4: 2026 Conditions of Entry

1. Eligible books must have been published between **1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025**.
2. Entries are to be made in accordance with the following dates:
 - Books published between 1 January and 31 August 2025 must be submitted **no later than 5pm, Wednesday, 3 September 2025**.
 - Books published between 1 September and 31 December 2025 must be submitted **no earlier than Thursday, 4 September 2025 and no later than 5pm, Thursday, 16 October 2025**. (See clause 9 below regarding proofs for November or December titles.)

NB: Submissions received after these dates will not be considered.

3. All entries must have been allocated an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and must have the title's data registered with NielsenIQ BookData (making the book visible to potential customers such as bookstores and libraries, see more at <https://www.nielsentitleeditor.com/titleeditor/>).
4. All books submitted must be entered with the knowledge and agreement of the authors and illustrators concerned.
5. All **print** entries must have been widely offered nationally to retail bookshops by the time of the submission, with in-store release intended no later than 31 December 2025.

All **e-book** entries must be widely available online at the time of submission, with release via at least two major online retailers (see clause 3 in Section 3 for examples) intended no later than 31 December 2025. E-books submitted for the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction must become p-books within 21 working days of being longlisted.
6. Publishers are required to guarantee that all books submitted will be readily available to the public and can be easily obtained by booksellers at standard trade terms. These terms would generally include discount to bookshops of no less than 35 percent off the retail price, prompt delivery to store (small order surcharges may apply), and advance agreement on sale or return or firm sale terms. If a publisher does not have established relationships with bookstores, they must provide clear contact details and the offer of trade discounts for retailers on their website.
7. Publishers are required to guarantee that they will not remainder books submitted for the awards prior to the awards ceremony.

8. Physical copies / e-book access as appropriate must be provided at time of submission. Details of this are contained in the 'How to Enter' section below. **No entry will be deemed to be eligible until copies / e-book links are received.**
9. The organisers will accept page proofs of books with a November or December on-sale date if the physical book is not yet with the publisher at the time that submissions close, but the stipulated number of physical copies of the book must be with the organisers no later than 5pm, Friday, 21 November 2025. **Late submissions will not be considered.**
10. All entries MUST be accompanied by the following materials which should be uploaded with your entry:
 - A detailed Title Information sheet
 - A hi-res print quality digital (300 dpi jpeg) image of the author/illustrator for media use
 - A hi-res print quality digital image (300 dpi jpeg) of the front cover of the book
 - For e-books, metadata proof of publication date, and advice on download expiry dates.**Unless these requirements are met, the entry will not be considered eligible.**
11. Publishers of shortlisted titles will be required to supply seven (7) additional copies of each title for promotional purposes immediately on announcement of shortlisting.
12. Publishers of shortlisted and winning titles must make every endeavour to sticker their titles with the awards stickers supplied by the New Zealand Book Awards Trust.
13. Any subsequent reprint should include an approved reference to the appropriate award on the book jacket, the text to be approved by the Awards Administrator prior to printing.
14. Publishers may, during the awards period, publish a paperback edition of a book selected as a finalist in a hardback edition. Full details of the paperback edition (ISBN, RRP, release date etc.) must be provided as soon as possible after the publisher is advised that the book has been selected as a finalist. Details of both editions will be noted in publicity material.
15. Publishers must guarantee that, with the exception of extreme and unforeseen circumstances, all finalist authors and illustrators will be present at the awards ceremony to be staged as part of the Auckland Writers Festival on 13 May 2026 in Auckland.
16. Travel and accommodation costs for authors and illustrators attending the awards ceremony are the responsibility of the submitting publisher.
17. Entry Fees: A flat fee of NZ\$160.00 + GST will apply for each print or e-book entered. This fee is to be paid online by credit card at time of entry.
18. Publishers submitting entries are asked to make all reasonable efforts to ensure their shortlisted authors are available for promotional work during March to May 2026.
19. Category award finalists are asked to be available for a rehearsal and finalists' function just ahead of the awards ceremony on 13 May 2026, and are invited to attend the awards ceremony after-party event.
20. Fiction finalists are asked to be available for the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction 2026 Winner's Interview, an Auckland Writers Festival event to be held on Friday, 15 May 2026.
21. Books entered in the awards will not be returned under any circumstances.
22. Publishers must in all instances refer to the fiction category award as the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction, the poetry category as the Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry, and the illustrated non-fiction category as the BookHub Award for Illustrated Non-Fiction. The best first book awards must be referred to as the Mātātuhi Foundation Best First Book Awards.
23. The decision of the judges is final. No correspondence will be entered into between publishers or authors and the judges.

24. Queries on eligibility or any other queries should be directed to Awards Administrator Christina Chan, mobile: 021 707 242, email: awards@nzbookawards.org.nz

Section 5: How to Enter

1. All entries must be submitted online at www.nzbookawards.nz
2. Submissions may be made singly or you can submit several titles at once.
3. You must complete the Entered Title section for each book submitted and one Declaration per online submission. At any time you can finish submissions and move to the payment screen.
4. For both print and e-book titles: a Title Information sheet and hi-res digital author and cover images must be uploaded at the time an entry is submitted.
5. For e-books: metadata proof of publication date and details on download expiry dates are also required.
6. Payments will only be accepted online by credit card.
7. For all titles, materials must be forwarded to the Awards Administrator at the same time as submission:
 - In respect of print books:
 - FOUR (4) copies of each title being submitted must be received by the Awards Administrator no later than four days after submission of the online entry form.
 - For titles with an on-sale date of November or December where the physical book is not yet with the publisher, page proofs should be submitted within the four-day deadline, In these cases, physical copies of the book must be with the Administrator no later than 5pm, Friday, 21 November.
 - The delivery address for physical books and proofs is:

Ockham New Zealand Book Awards
c/- Auckland Writers Festival
Level 2, The Darby Building
8 Darby Street
Auckland 1010
(Cnr Darby & Elliott Streets, entry via Elliott Street)
 - **Please ensure that distribution staff are aware of this address.**
 - *The Awards Administrator will acknowledge receipt - please keep your tracking number in case of any issues.*
 - In respect of e-books, **directions for downloading four copies** must be emailed to awards@nzbookawards.org.nz. Files should be submitted as file type .epub, .mobi or the file type applicable for an e-reader. Please also submit links to the websites where the book is for sale to the New Zealand public, to demonstrate the e-book meets the distribution criteria.

Section 6: 2026 Judging Process and Criteria

The Judging Process

Four panels of three judges each will be appointed by the New Zealand Book Awards Trust to judge the fiction, two non-fiction and poetry awards. They will decide the longlist, the shortlist and the winners, and also the four Best First Book winners in the four main category genres. In the case of the Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction, an international judge will be invited to join the local judges in determining the overall winner from the finalists.

Judges are empowered to request additional expert assistance in the judging process if, in their opinion, the skills of the judging panel are not sufficient to give all submissions full and fair assessment. An additional Māori language advisor will be appointed to assist them if required.

A separate judge will be appointed for Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award if eligible entries are received. This award will be given at that judge's discretion.

General Judging Criteria

The objective of the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards is to promote excellence in, and provide recognition of, the best books for adult readers published annually in New Zealand. The judges are tasked with meeting that objective.

Judging guidelines

Judges will consider the books as a whole. Attention will be given to the integration of all the contributing elements that constitute the finished product including:

- Enduring literary merit and the overall quality of authorship.
- Quality of illustration and graphic presentation, as applicable.
- Production factors including jacket design, general design, typography, indexing and the standard of editing.
- Impact of the book on the community, taking account of factors such as topicality, public interest, commercial viability, entertainment, cultural and educational values, lifespan and value for money.
- For the **Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction**, the degree to which the book engages and nourishes the reader's intellect and imagination and, for short story collections, to which the stories are a unified and coherent whole.
- For **Te Mūrau o te Tuhi Māori Language Award**, the judge is looking for a well-written, original work that is originated in te reo Māori, that is of high literary merit and which demonstrates creative insight.