



# Judging Panel 2026

## GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ENGLISH JUDGES

Expressions of interest in being a judge of the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults are invited from members of the public with relevant experience, and from the children's literature community. They may be authors, publishers, academics, reviewers, critics, booksellers, teachers, librarians, and beyond. What is important is that they have:

- A wide knowledge and appreciation of New Zealand children's literature.
- Relevant experience and/or qualifications and a recognised standing in the field of children's literature.
- An appreciation of book illustration and design.
- Ideally some knowledge of te reo Māori, and appreciation of te ao Māori.
- The ability and a commitment to work to the timelines required for the judging process.
- The availability to travel as required to one in-person judging panel meeting and to the awards ceremony.

Judging of the titles submitted in the English language and bilingual categories, as well as the Illustration category, will be undertaken by a team of five judges, one of whom will be appointed as convenor. The five judges will be appointed to the panel by the New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa.

The Trust will also separately select and appoint at least three fluent te reo Māori speakers to judge Te Kura Pounamu entries for books written entirely in, or translated entirely into, te reo Māori. A general information pack for prospective judges for Te Kura Pounamu category can be found [here](#).

### **Role of the English judging panel**

The five-person judging panel has responsibility for:

- Working with the Awards Administrator to meet judging deadlines.
- Reading all books entered (approximately 160) and establishing a shortlist of up to five titles in each of the following categories:
  - Picture Book Award
  - Junior Fiction Award
  - Young Adult Fiction Award
  - Non-fiction Award
  - Illustration Award

- Best First Book Award
- Attending two briefing meetings and at least three judging meetings (four of these meetings will be via Zoom and one in-person), and the awards ceremony.
- Selecting a winner in each of the four English language and bilingual categories, the Illustration category and the Best First Book Award (the latter two in consultation with Te Kura Pounamu panel if te reo Māori titles are eligible).
- Together with Te Kura Pounamu panel, selecting the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year from the main category winners (excluding Best First Book).
- Sharing the tasks of writing comments on each of the shortlisted books for the finalists' booklet and website, and preparing speeches and citations for the winning books to be read at the awards ceremony.
- Participating in presentations at the awards ceremony.
- Contributing to the preparation of a confidential report on the judging process for the Book Awards Trust.

**NB:** Bilingual books are eligible in the categories which the English-language panel will judge, and the organisers welcome applicants with a deep knowledge of te ao Māori and te reo Māori, to provide a Māori lens on both these and all the entries.

### **Role of the convenor of English language judges**

The convenor of the five-person English judging panel has responsibility for:

- Selecting the remaining judges in discussion with the Book Awards Trust.
- Attending two briefing meetings and hosting at least three judging meetings (four of the meetings will be via Zoom and one in-person), as well as attending the awards ceremony.
- Guiding the judging process, in consultation with the Awards Administrator.
- Ensuring deadlines for judging are met.
- Developing a strong rapport with Te Kura Pounamu convenor to facilitate collaboration of the two panels.
- Advising the Awards Administrator, in confidence, of the judges' decisions on finalists and winners, by the agreed deadlines.
- Liaising with the Awards Administrator and publicist on administration and public relations questions.
- Representing the judging panel in media and public relations activities (e.g. press interviews, meeting with sponsor representatives). The convenor must be available (possibly during the day or evening) for media interviews for the key periods of the finalists' and winners' announcements.
- Compiling the written judges' comments and statements on finalists and winners for publication on the website and in the finalists' booklet.
- Participating in presentations at the awards ceremony, including the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year presentation.
- Preparing a confidential report on the judging process, with recommendations, for the Book Awards Trust.

### **Specialist advisors**

The judging panel may wish to consult with outside experts on specific questions or issues. The Awards Administrator will organise an appropriate advisor.

## **New Zealand Book Awards Trust**

The New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa represents the interests of the groups involved in the development of the NZ Book Awards for Children and Young Adults, in addition to the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, and Phantom Billstickers National Poetry Day. The Trust has established the policy and direction for the NZ Book Awards for Children and Young Adults, and is committed to ensuring a high public profile for the Awards and associated promotional activities.

### Current Members of the NZ Book Awards Trust are:

Publishers Association of New Zealand Te Rau o Tākupu (PANZ), Suzy Maddox

Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand, Renée Rowland

LIANZA Te Rau Herenga o Aotearoa, Kim Tairi

New Zealand Society of Authors Te Puni Kaituhi o Aotearoa, Elena de Roo

Independent members, Nicola Legat (chair), Elizabeth Jones, Richard Pamatatau, and Garth Biggs

### **Role of Awards Administrator**

It is the Awards Administrator's role to support and assist the judges in the judging process and to ensure deadlines for the judging process are met. While the Awards Administrator may attend some judging meetings, they have no involvement in the judging decisions. Judges may call for advice or assistance at any time during the judging process and should direct all communication through the Awards Administrator.

## **Judging Timeline / Commitment**

### **2025**

30 Oct – Expressions of interest due from potential judges

Mid-late Nov – Judging panel confirmed

19 Nov – Call for submissions from publishers for 2026 NZ Book Awards for Children & Young Adults

Early Dec – Judging panel announced (media release)

Early Dec – Judges' briefing meeting (via Zoom)

Mid-Dec 2025 to end Mar 2026 – Judges' reading period. Books will be sent to the judges in batches (approx 160 books in total)

### **2026**

Mid-March – Judges' briefing meeting (via Zoom)

Early April – Judges' finalists meeting (via Zoom)

Mid- to late May – Judges' category winners meeting (in-person, location tbc)

Mid- to late June – Judges' meeting to decide the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year (via Zoom)

Mid-August – Awards Ceremony (in Wellington)

## **Honoraria & Expenses**

Judges receive a full set of books submitted for the awards together with an honorarium for English language judges of \$1,500 (ex GST, before tax). The convenor of judges in the English language section will receive an honorarium of \$1,800 (ex GST, before tax).

Travel for attendance at meetings and the awards ceremony will be arranged by the Awards Administrator and costs borne by the Trust. Any other reasonable expenses which are incurred by the judges in connection with their task, such as postage or telephone calls, will be reimbursed.

## **Selection process**

The English language judging panel will be selected by board members of the New Zealand Book Awards Trust, along with the Awards Administrator and 2026 convenor of judges. Geographic, cultural and community representation, as well as relevant qualifications and experience, will all be considered in the final make-up of the panel. The Book Awards Trust reserves the right not to appoint entirely from the applications received, and reserves the right to appoint by invitation. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised before the panel is announced, and are welcome to reapply in subsequent years.