



Judging Panel 2026

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR TE REO MĀORI JUDGES

Expressions of interest in being a judge of Te Kura Pounamu category at 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 kaituhi, publishers, academics, reviewers, critics, booksellers, kaiako, 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.
- Fluency in te reo Māori.
- A deep knowledge of te ao Māori.
- The ability and a commitment to work to the timelines required for the judging process.
- The availability to attend regular video call judging panel meetings, and to travel to the awards ceremony.

At least three judges will be selected to deliberate over titles entered in Te Kura Pounamu category, which covers books written entirely in, or translated entirely into, te reo Māori. The selection process will be undertaken by the New Zealand Book Awards Trust Te Ohu Tiaki i Te Rau Hiringa, who will appoint one of the judges as panel convenor.

The Trust will also separately select and appoint five judges to the English language judging panel, which will deliberate over titles submitted in the English language categories, the Illustration category and the Best First Book Award. 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. A general information pack for prospective judges for English language and bilingual categories can be found [here](#).

Role of Te Kura Pounamu judging panel

The judging panel has responsibility for:

- Working with the Awards Administrator to meet judging deadlines.
- Reading all books entered (approximately 10-15) and establishing a joint shortlist of up to five titles (of any genre), including books both originally written in te reo Māori and translated works, for Te Kura Pounamu Awards.

- Attending one briefing meeting and at least three judging meetings (via Zoom), as well as the awards ceremony.
- Selecting winners of Te Kura Pounamu Awards (one for books originally written in te reo Māori, and a separate winner for translated works).
- Providing advice to judges on the English language panel regarding books written entirely in te reo Māori that are eligible for either the Illustration or Best First Book awards.
- Together with the English language judging 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.

Role of the convenor of Te Kura Pounamu judges

The convenor of te reo Māori judging panel has responsibility for:

- Selecting the remaining judges in discussion with the Book Awards Trust.
- Attending one briefing meeting and hosting at least three judging meetings (via Zoom), 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 the English language judging convenor to facilitate collaboration of the two panels.
- Advising the Awards Administrator, in confidence, of the judges' decisions on the finalists and winners, by the agreed deadlines.
- Assisting the English language panel as required with input and advice regarding any bilingual entries in the English language categories, and any elements of te ao Māori in English language or bilingual entries.
- 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.
- Writing comments and statements on the 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.

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 (approximately 10-15 books in total)

2026

Early April – Judges' finalists meeting (via Zoom)

Mid- to late May – Judges' category winners meeting (via Zoom)

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 te reo Māori category together with an honorarium for Te Kura Pounamu judges of \$300 (ex GST, before tax). The convenor of Te Kura Pounamu judges will receive an honorarium of \$400 (ex GST, before tax).

Travel for attendance at 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

Te Kura Pounamu 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 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.