

Media Release

The Hon Colin Brooks MP
Minister for Development Victoria
Minister for Precincts
Minister for Creative Industries



Thursday, 20 March 2025

HONOURING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JOHN MARSDEN

The Allan Labor Government is celebrating the life and legacy of Victorian author John Marsden with a Victorian Premier's Literary Award to be named in his honour.

The John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults will be awarded next year, honouring the literary legend who passed away last December.

John Marsden started his career as a teacher before his first book, *So Much to Tell You*, was published in 1987 – it became an international bestseller and won multiple awards including taking out a Victorian Premier's Literary Award in 1988.

Marsden went on to create one of the most successful ever Australian book series for young adults, the seven-book *Tomorrow* series. Beginning with *Tomorrow, When the War Began* in 1993, the series won several awards in Australia and garnered international acclaim before spurring a second wildly successful book series *The Ellie Chronicles*.

Over the course of his writing career, Marsden published over 40 books. He was also a committed educator, teaching at schools in NSW and Victoria. In 2006, he established the alternative Candlebark School in the Macedon Ranges and ten years later he opened an arts-focused secondary school in the region, Alice Miller School.

Marsden was driven to inspire young people to write and visited thousands of schools, delivering talks and workshops. He was also the patron of youth literary organisation Express Media.

To be awarded as part of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards in 2026, the John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults will be worth \$25,000. The winner will also go in the running for the Victorian Prize for Literature, which includes a further \$100,000 in prize money.

For more on the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, including the 2025 winners, visit wheelercentre.com

Quotes attributable to Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks

"John Marsden's work has inspired a love of reading and writing in generations of young people – here in Victoria and around the world. His work is so captivating that it continues to entice young people pick up his books, and not put them down."

"Through the John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults we honour his extraordinary legacy, and celebrate the life-changing impact books can have on young people."

Quote attributable to John Marsden's family

"John Marsden's family is thrilled that John has been honoured by having this important award named after him. John was a pioneer in creating literature that was accessible and meaningful to young adults. It was his lifelong passion, and we look forward with excitement to seeing this prize awarded, thereby continuing John's great legacy."

Quotes attributable to The Wheeler Centre CEO Erin Vincent

"John Marsden's impact on young adult literature is immeasurable, inspiring creativity and igniting a love of reading among young audiences around the world."

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"Only someone with such deep respect for young people could create such beloved characters that will live on in our national memory. The Wheeler Centre is thrilled to honour John Marsden as part of the 2026 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards, celebrating the very best of Australian writers."