



For immediate release, Thursday 24 September

BOOK FOR BIRD LOVERS JUDGED BEST DESIGNED IN AOTEAROA

A book created to encourage a love of ornithology in children has been judged the best designed in Aotearoa at the **2026 PANZ Book Design Awards**.

It was an easy decision for the judges who unanimously declared *Omnibird* by Giselle Clarkson (Gecko Press) designed by Vida Kelly with Giselle Clarkson, the overall winner at a ceremony held in Auckland this evening. The win marks just the third time a children's title has taken out the supreme award, the **Gerard Reid Award for Best Book sponsored by NielsenIQ BookData**.

"The overall book was a fairly quick and unanimous decision. It was the only book to score perfect 10s and it is just a brilliant book all round," said Convening Judge Erica Harrison.

The judges praised *Omnibird*, which also won the **Scholastic New Zealand Award for Best Children's Book**, for its beautifully resolved and cohesive design, finding every element to be thoughtfully considered.

"The handwritten typography, earthy yet vibrant colour palette, and journal-inspired approach make scientific content feel approachable, engaging, and full of curiosity. The integration of annotations, illustrations, and supporting details create the feeling of exploring personal field notes, while the tactile uncoated stock enhances the warmth and character of the design. A truly immersive and inviting book that makes learning about its subject a joy."

The book was selected from a particularly strong field of candidates vying for this year's awards. In an unusual move, two titles were awarded the **Penguin Random House New Zealand Award for Best Illustrated Book** - *Atlas of the New Zealand Wars: Volume One 1834–1864, Early Engagements to the Second Taranaki War* by Derek Leask (Auckland University Press), designed by Alan Deare (Area Design) and *Mr Ward's Map: Victorian Wellington street by street* by Elizabeth Cox (Massey University Press), designed by Jo Bailey.

“This was the toughest category to judge,” says Erica. “*The Atlas of New Zealand Wars* and *Mr Ward's Map* are both exceptional books, and both happen to have wrap around maps! It was impossible to separate them, and we felt both books deserve the acknowledgement.”

These are just a few of the eleven awards announced on the night, with categories celebrating cover design, typography, educational publishing and emerging design talent.

A moving segment of the evening was the presentation of the inaugural **Keely O'Shannessey People's Choice Award**, in honour of the talented book designer and friend of many in book publishing who passed away in June this year. Event attendees had the opportunity to vote for their pick of the finalists, recognising the design of Shaun Naufahu & Giordano Zatta (Alt Group) on *Sio fakaTonga 'ae 'Aati fakaTonga: Tongan Views of Tongan Arts* by Professor Hūfanga He-Ako-Moe-Lotu, Dr Ōkunitino Māhina, Professor Māui-Tāvā-He-Ako Dr Tēvita O. Ka'ili, Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai MNZM (Kula-'Uli Publishing) as the winner. This title also won the **Te Papa Press Award for Best Typography**.

The PANZ Book Design Awards were established by the Publishers Association of New Zealand Te Rau o Tākupu (PANZ) to promote excellence in, and provide recognition for, the best book design in New Zealand.

The 2026 PANZ Book Design Award winners are:

Gerard Reid Award for Best Book sponsored by NielsenIQ BookData

- *Omnibird: An Avian Investigator's Handbook* by Giselle Clarkson (Gecko Press). **Designed by Vida Kelly with Giselle Clarkson**

Penguin Random House New Zealand Award for Best Illustrated Book

- *Atlas of the New Zealand Wars: Volume One 1834–1864, Early Engagements to the Second Taranaki War* by Derek Leask (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Alan Deare & Dave McDonald (Area Design)**

AND

- *Mr Ward's Map: Victorian Wellington street by street* by Elizabeth Cox (Massey University Press). **Designed by Jo Bailey**

Best Non-Illustrated Book

- *Tony Fomison: Life of the Artist* by Mark Forman (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Arch and Jane MacDonnell (Inhouse)**

Scholastic New Zealand Award for Best Children's Book

- *Omnibird: An Avian Investigator's Handbook* by Giselle Clarkson (Gecko Press). **Designed by Vida Kelly with Giselle Clarkson**

PANZ Award for Best Education Book or Series — Primary

- *My First Ikura* by Qiane Matata-Sipu, illustrated by Isobel Joy Te Aho-White (QIANE+co). **Designed by Chloë Reweti**

PANZ Award for Best Education Book or Series — Secondary/Tertiary

- *Toitū te Whenua* by Lauren Keenan (Penguin Random House). **Designed by Cat Taylor**

Award for Best Cookbook or Lifestyle Book

- *Family Cooking* by Di McHardy (Di McHardy, Mama's Meals Limited). **Cover designed by Logan Smith (Sunday Best) and interior designed by Georgia Yates (Sunday Best)**

Allen & Unwin Award for Best General Cover

- *Three Wee Bookshops at the End of the World* by Ruth Shaw (Allen & Unwin Aotearoa New Zealand). **Design by Katrina Duncan, illustration by Sophie Watson**

HarperCollins Publishers Award for Best Cover

- *Whenua* edited by Chloe Cull, Felicity Milburn & Melanie Oliver (Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū). **Designed by Aaron Beehre**

Te Papa Press Award for Best Typography

- *Sio fakaTonga 'ae 'Aati fakaTonga: Tongan Views of Tongan Arts* by Professor Hūfanga He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr 'Ōkusitino Māhina, Professor Māui-Tāvā-He-Ako Dr Tēvita O. Ka'ili, Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai MNZM (Kula-'Uli Publishing). **Designed by Shaun Naufahu & Giordano Zatta (Alt Group)**

Hachette Aotearoa New Zealand Emerging Designer

Victoria Wigzell

- *The Floral Dream* by Olivia McCord (Potton & Burton)

Keely O'Shannessey People's Choice Award

- *Sio fakaTonga 'ae 'Aati fakaTonga: Tongan Views of Tongan Arts* by Professor Hūfanga He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr 'Ōkusitino Māhina, Professor Māui-Tāvā-He-Ako Dr Tēvita O. Ka'ili, Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai MNZM. (Kula-'Uli Publishing). **Designed by Shaun Naufahu & Giordano Zatta (Alt Group)**

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For more information please visit: www.bookdesignawards.co.nz

High-res images are available [here](#)

FOR INTERVIEWS OR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Gemma Finlay on behalf of PANZ, 027 628 9695 gemma@notablepr.co.nz

THE JUDGING PANEL:

Erica Harrison (Convenor) is an illustrator and children's book designer based in Auckland. She is the co-founder of new children's publishing studio, Messy Press, which recently won Best Children's Publisher of the Year for Oceania at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. With over 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, she has designed activity books, board books, and illustrated non-fiction for some of the world's best children's publishers. Her graphic novel for young readers, *Detective Stanley and the Mystery at the Museum*, is a finalist at this year's New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults.

Carly Yates is a designer at Seven with over 11 years' experience across a range of design disciplines, with editorial design holding a special place for her. She enjoys solving the puzzle of organising complex content

into engaging, considered reading experiences, creating tangible pieces that reflect the care and craftsmanship behind them. A few of her notable book projects include *Making Space*, *The Collector* and *Edith Collier*. Having spent much of her career preparing and entering work for design awards, she is excited to be on the other side of the judging process. She looks forward to celebrating the craft, creativity and collaboration behind exceptional book design in Aotearoa.

Dr George Hajian is a designer, artist, and Senior Lecturer at Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, Auckland University of Technology. His design practice focuses on publication design, printmaking, and self-publishing, with a strong emphasis on analogue processes and material experimentation. Originally from Beirut, Lebanon, George has worked across the design and publishing industries in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad. His art practice brings together collage, screen-printing, and mark-making, with a particular interest in printed matter, paper, and the tactile qualities of the handmade.

Courtney Smith is the co-owner and book buyer for Lamplight Books, an independent bookstore that champions beautiful books. Lamplight was awarded Bookshop of the Year in 2023 and serves a lively community of artists, architects, and designers.

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