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Robbie Arnott wins inaugural Hedberg Writer-in-Residence award

Acclaimed Tasmanian novelist Robbie Arnott is the winner of the inaugural University of Tasmania Hedberg Writer-in-Residence Program, an opportunity he has described as “life-changing”.

“As a Tasmanian author working through this period of declining arts funding, not to mention our nation’s tendency to focus its literary attentions on the larger cities of the mainland, this is both timely and tremendously welcome,” Arnott said.

The inaugural program, which will run for 12 weeks from January to March in 2021, was open by application to established Tasmanian writers. From 2022 onwards the program will be open to all published Australian writers.

The Executive Dean of the College of Arts, Law and Education at the University of Tasmania, Professor Kate Darian-Smith, said the writer-in-residence program would provide a fantastic opportunity within the School of Humanities’ place-based curriculum.

“There is no question as to the importance of the arts in Tasmania, and Robbie’s work gives us an outstanding example of how, creatively, we can take Tasmania to the world.

“It’s very exciting to be able to bring a writer of Robbie’s calibre to work with our students and the community.”

Arnott said the residency would provide the precious time and space needed for him to take time off from full-time employment to work on his third novel, which is contracted to Text Publishing and due for release in 2022.

He will engage with the University’s creative writing students, emerging Tasmanian authors, and the broader Tasmanian creative community through workshops, masterclasses and public talks in the north and south of the State.

“I’m excited to be able to give back through workshops, masterclasses and public talks. I hope these will be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for

those who participate, and I know that these opportunities will also give me further valuable experience in teaching and discussing writing.

"As fellow writers, students and staff of the University will have much to teach me, and it's gratifying to be able to assist their careers in the way that so many writers assisted me when I studied English at the University of Tasmania."

Dr Robert Clarke, the coordinator of the residency program and Head of English in the University's School of Humanities, said the residency's selection panel had chosen from a large number of applications of a very high standard.

"The field of applicants was a testament to the depth of writing talent we have in Tasmania. The choice was very difficult, but ultimately we are delighted to offer this inaugural residency to an exceptionally talented young Tasmanian author," Dr Clarke said.

"Robbie's first two novels have made a significant splash on the national and international stages. He brings both experience and recognition to our first Hedberg residency."

Arnott's first novel, *Flames*, was published in 2018 by Text Publishing and sold internationally. It has been listed for more than 13 national and international literary awards (including the Miles Franklin). A TV adaptation has received funding from Screen Tasmania and is currently in development.

His second novel, *The Rain Heron*, was recently released in Australia and the UK to highly positive reviews, including the description of Arnott as "one of the best prose stylists currently working in this country" (*The Saturday Paper*).

Arnott is a past winner of the Margaret Scott Prize and the Tasmanian Young Writer's Fellowship. He was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and the Queensland Literary Awards. He has spoken as a guest of the Melbourne Writers Festival and the Brisbane Writers Festival and was a speaker at the prestigious Ubud Writers Festival in 2019, where his masterclass on nature writing sold out.

The Hedberg Writer-in-Residence Program carries a stipend of \$30,000. It is funded by the [Copyright Agency Cultural Fund](#) and the College of Arts, Law and Education, University of Tasmania.

[Click here](#) for more information on the Hedberg Writer-in-Residence Program, including the selection criteria and the selection panel.

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