



Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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PRIVATE MEMBER STATEMENT

Australian South Sea Islanders; Queensland Literary Awards

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (2.28 pm): I would like to take a moment to acknowledge family and friends of the South Sea Islander community who are present in the gallery and attending an event here in parliament today. I acknowledge one of my great-great-grandfathers, a Rotuma man. I acknowledge that, although the event today was spruiked as a bipartisan event, unfortunately—and I do apologise—we were not invited to the event. Not all of the parliament was invited, but I do want to pass on my absolute regard and congratulations to the community, my family and my friends for everything that they do for the community and what they do for Queensland. Thank you.

I want to speak about the Queensland Literary Awards. They have long been a beacon of our state's cultural life, celebrating the voices that shape who we are and how we understand ourselves, yet recent events have cast a troubling shadow over this institution. In May, the State Library of Queensland cancelled the black&write! Writing Fellowships, a writers fellowship designed specifically to support First Nations authors. This decision was made following a personal direction from the LNP's Minister for the Arts, despite the fellowship being awarded by an independent process utilising independent literary award judges. The minister's intervention led to the abrupt cancellation of the awards ceremony just hours before it was due to take place. Following the minister's direction to rescind the annual award, 12 Queensland Literary Awards judges resigned—almost half of the highly respected judges—reportedly in protest.

This is a deeply concerning situation not only for the reputation of the black&write! Writing Fellowships but also for the Queensland Literary Awards and, more broadly, for the arts in Queensland. The issue has been widely reported, with articles in an array of media outlets including the *Courier-Mail* and *Brisbane Times* highlighting the biggest mass resignation of Queensland Literary Awards judges the State Librarian has ever witnessed. The resignations of these highly respected judges directly impacted the 2025 awards timeline. According to ArtsHub, the shortlist—originally scheduled for 5 August—was delayed, and the announcement of winners, initially set for 12 September, was also pushed back.

This is not just about one author or one award; this is about the erosion of integrity and independence in our public institutions. The Coaldrake report made some very clear recommendations, and already we see that the government does not take them seriously at all. The message that the minister is sending to the arts sector, through the decision to override an independent panel of judges and censor artists based not on the work submitted but on their past comments, actions and relationships, will likely have a profound impact on the reputation of the arts in Queensland. The politicisation of the Literary Awards is emblematic of a government more concerned with controlling narratives than with respecting the conventions of artistic freedom. It is a pattern that erodes public trust and undermines independent institutions.