



Rise and Fall of Gunns Limited by Quentin Beresford wins top Tasmanian literary award

By Ros Lehman

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A book about former Tasmanian timber giant Gunns has taken out a major award as part of the Premier's Literary Prize.

Author and academic Quentin Beresford won the \$25,000 Tasmania Book Prize for his forensic work *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Limited*.

The judges called it a difficult and painful story which had an impact on all aspects of Tasmanian politics and society.

Beresford said that was why he decided to write it.

"I was reading about fast-track legislation being put through in the Tasmanian Parliament, about the pulp mill, and I just had a light bulb moment about the way in which politics is so susceptible to the influence of corporations and vested interests," he said.

The book was seven years in the making.

"This is a massive corporation. It had its tentacles in all parts of politics and all parts of the commercial operations of this island, and many people could have written it, but everybody would write it with their own particular backgrounds and insights."

Gunns went into voluntary liquidation in 2012 reporting a loss of \$1 billion.

Former chairman John Gay was convicted in 2013 of insider trading and fined \$50,000 for selling Gunns shares in 2009 when he had price-sensitive information.

Legal action is now being taken to recoup proceeds from the crime, but his lawyers have argued he should not have to pay because he did not make a profit.

Richard Flanagan won the category for best book by a Tasmanian writer for *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, which won the 2014 Man Booker Prize.

He also won one of three People's Choice Awards.

Lois Murphy won the University of Tasmania unpublished manuscript prize for her work *Soon*, which she described as essentially a ghost story.

"It's about people under attack from unknown forces," she said.

"So it's sort of exploring the lives of people who have nowhere to go to get away from a terrifying, life-endangering situation, so it's I consider it quite relevant to our current time."

Topics: books-literature, awards-and-prizes, tas

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PHOTO: Quentin Beresford says he chose to write about Gunns because of the company's years of influence on the island. (ABC Local: Conversations)

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