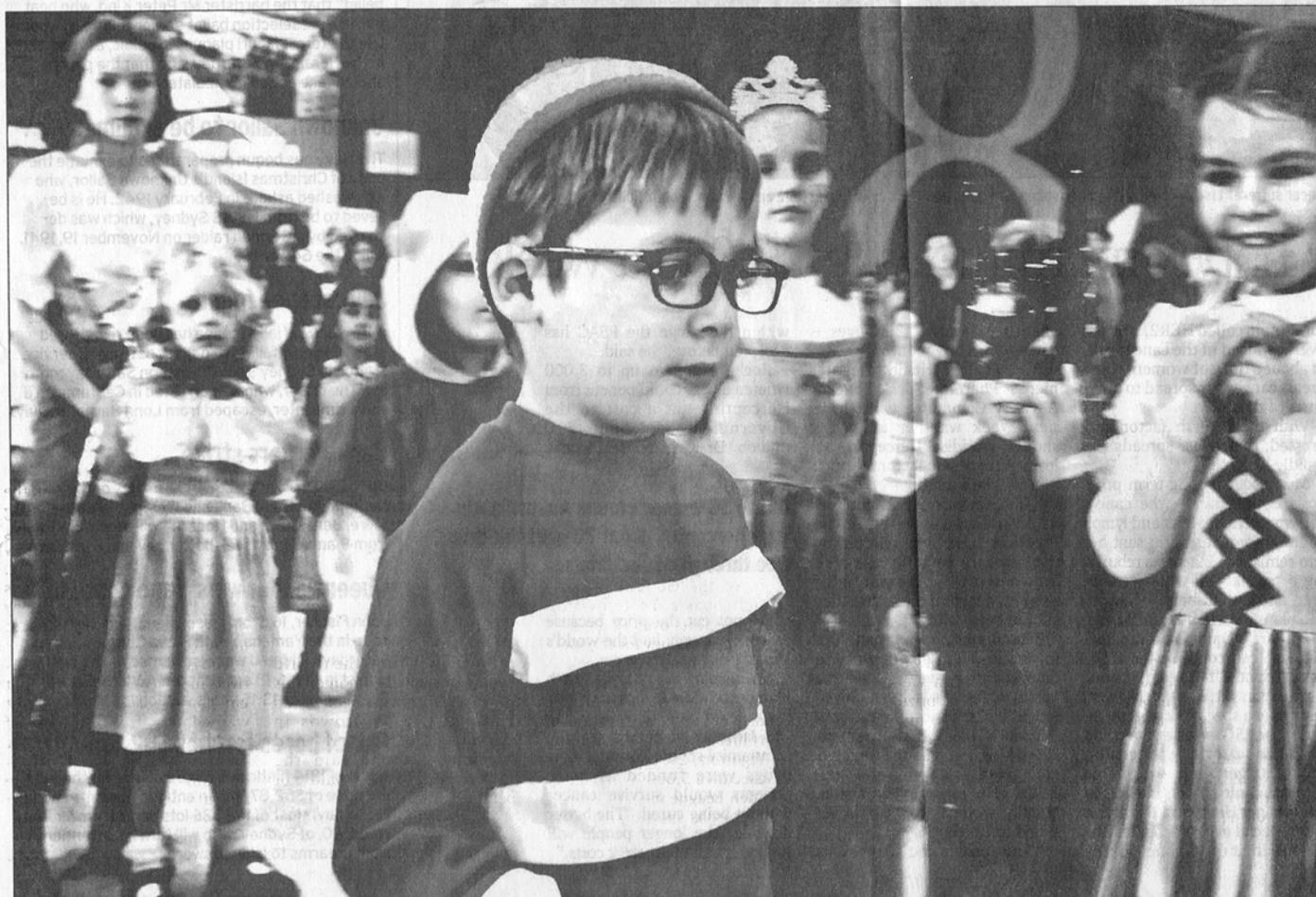


Children's history books so dull judges leave them on the shelf



Angela Bennie
Literary Editor

The writing of history for children was of such a low standard that the judges of this year's NSW Premier's History Awards have refused to choose a shortlist from the books nominated for the \$15,000 prize.

"The books submitted in the category were just dull," said one of the judges, Ms Maria Hill. "They were just not the kind of books you would want to give a prize to, let alone signal that this was the kind of writing we should be encouraging."

It is the second time the Children's History Prize has failed to make the grade; no prize was given in the category in 1999.

The problem is considered sufficiently serious that the History Council of NSW will conduct a forum later this year to address the issue.

But in other categories a small revolution has taken place in

how history is written, with some of the country's best minds writing exciting and challenging books.

Tim Bonyhady's bestselling *The Colonial Earth*, which reassesses white European colonial attitudes to the land, has been nominated for the Australian History prize, as has Anna Haebich's meticulously researched and moving *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families, 1800-2000*.

Haebich's book won two of the NSW Premier's Literary Awards earlier this year, including Book of the Year. Closer to home, Clive Faro and Garry Wotherspoon's wry look at the character of Sydney's Oxford Street, in their *Street Seen: A History of Oxford Street*, has been nominated for the Community and Regional History prize.

The awards, valued at \$75,000, will be announced by the Premier, Mr Carr, on September 17.

THE WRITE STUFF

An edited shortlist for the NSW 2001 Premier's history awards
GENERAL HISTORY

- *Fighting Spirit of East Timor: The Life of Martinho da Costa Lopes* by Rowena Lennox
- *Ahab's Trade: The Saga of South Sea Whaling* by Granville Allan Mawer
- *The Origins of Irish Convict Transportation to NSW* by Bob Reece

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

- *The Colonial Earth* by Tim Bonyhady
- *William John McKell: Boilermaker, Premier, Governor-General* by Christopher Cunneen
- *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families, 1800-2000* by Anna Haebich

COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL HISTORY

- *The Captive White Woman of Gipps Land: In Pursuit of the Legend* by Julie Carr
- *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* by Peter Read
- *Through Silent Country* by Carolyn

