

Miles Franklin Literary Award 2007
Shortlist

Carpentaria

Alexis Wright

Giramondo Publishing Company

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Alexis Wright is one of Australia's finest Aboriginal writers. *Carpentaria* is her second novel, a soaring epic set in the Gulf country of north-western Queensland, from where her people come.

Carpentaria's portrait of life in the precariously settled coastal town of Desperance centres on the powerful Phantom family, whose members are the leaders of the Pricklebush people, and their battles with old Joseph Midnight's tearaway Eastend mob on the one hand, and the white officials of Uptown and the neighbouring Gurfurrit mine on the other.

Wright's storytelling is operatic and surreal: a blend of myth and scripture, politics and farce. The novel teems with extraordinary characters – the outcast saviour Elias Smith, the religious zealot Mozzie Fishman, guru of the holy Aboriginal pilgrimage, the murderous mayor Stan Bruiser, the moth-ridden Captain Nicoli Finn, the activist and prodigal son Will Phantom, and above all, the rulers of the family, the queen of the rubbish-dump and the fish-embalming king of time, Angel Day and Normal Phantom – figures of such an intense imagining, they stand like giants in this storm-swept world.

About Alexis Wright

Alexis Wright is a member of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Her books include *Grog War*, a study of alcohol abuse in the outback town of Tennant Creek, and the novel *Plains of Promise*, which was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize, the Age Book of the Year and the NSW Premier's Award, and published as *Les Plaines de l'espoir* by the distinguished French publishing house Actes Sud.

'Her characters have a larger-than-life grotesquerie, filled with quirky density. Her dialogue has a vernacular rip and hook. Her imagination always wants to open a space to poetry. The history she deals with is huge and terrible, but it energises her in an almost loving way.' Nicholas Jose, *Sydney Morning Herald*