



Authors Winton, de Kretser, Wood, Coetzee, Funder invite MPs to do some ‘Summer Reading’ about the history of the Middle East

Embargoed until Tuesday 19 November 2024.

A group of more than 90 authors and literary supporters, including **Tim Winton, Charlotte Wood, Michelle de Kretser, J. M. Coetzee, Anna Funder, Pip Williams, Trent Dalton, André Dao, Rosie Batty** and **Tony Birch**, has come together to purchase and distribute a set of books to all federal parliamentarians on the history of the Middle East and what it means for today’s conflict.

All 227 senators and members of parliament were this week sent or handed a package containing a letter and five ‘authoritative, highly readable books’ endorsed by both **Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN)** and the **Jewish Council of Australia (JCA)**.

‘The political debate in Australia and internationally rarely touches on the issues, events, and historical analyses that these books reveal – despite their direct relevance to what is happening today,’ the group’s letter said.

‘We’re not asking anyone to change their personal opinions or public positions. We just ask that politicians consider reading one or more of these books in the hope that they might inform and illuminate discussion on the ghastly situation we have been watching unfold across the Middle East.’

The reading campaign, titled **Summer Reading for MPs**, is the brainchild of Melbourne architect Marcus O’Reilly, publisher Aviva Tuffield, writer Paddy O’Reilly, and IT specialist Jol Blazey.

The group arranged the summer reading project along with donors from a broad range of backgrounds and the support of 60 highly esteemed and award-winning writers, who ‘believe in the power of well-researched and well-written words to drive empathy and understanding’.

The five books delivered to federal parliamentarians were:

1. ***Balcony over Jerusalem*** by veteran Australian journalist and four-time Walkley Award winner **John Lyons**
2. ***A Very Short History of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*** by renowned Jewish historian and political scientist **Ilan Pappé**
3. ***The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine*** by Palestinian American writer and Columbia University historian **Rashid I. Khalidi**

4. ***Palestine A–Z***, an alphabetised list of definitions of commonly used terms by noted Irish writer **Kate Thompson**
5. ***The Sunbird***, a novella by Lebanese Australian author **Sara Haddad**, set between Palestine 1948 and Sydney 2023.

Parliamentarians who met directly with organisers to receive the books included Simon Birmingham MP, Ged Kearney MP, Julian Hill MP, Senator Mehreen Faruqi, Helen Haines MP, Bridget Archer MP, and Zoe Daniel MP.

The 90 signatories to the letter include Tim Winton, Michelle de Kretser, Professor J.M. Coetzee (FRSL), Charlotte Wood AM, Dist. Professor Kim Scott, Anna Funder, Nam Le, Chloe Hooper, Jock Serong, Professor Anita Heiss AM, Professor Clare Wright OAM, Hannah Kent, Josh Bornstein, Michael Robotham, Trent Dalton, Garry Disher, Rosie Batty and Pip Williams.

To arrange an interview with any of the following—

- **André Dao**, 2024 Prime Minister’s Literary Award-winning novelist and #SummerReadingforMPs signatory
- **Sara Haddad**, author whose novella *The Sunbird* is one of the five #SummerReadingforMPs titles
- **Aviva Tuffield**, publisher and #SummerReadingforMPs organiser.

— please contact Kirsty Wilson: kirstywilsonPR@gmail.com or **0431 262 389**.

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