



ACADEMY OF
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN AUSTRALIA

RECHNITZ MEMORIAL AWARD

NOMINATION GUIDELINES

THE RECHNITZ MEMORIAL AWARD

*For research excellence and leadership in
Indigenous society, culture and language*

About the Award

The annual Rechnitz Award of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia is intended to recognise excellence in research leadership and advancement of knowledge of Indigenous society, culture and language. The Award is **open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars** who must be nominated and endorsed by two Fellows of either the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia or the Australian Academy of Humanities. Recipients will be required to deliver a Rechnitz Lecture in the 12-months following their award and will also be invited to participate in the production of an Academy-produced video highlighting their work.

The Rechnitz Award is made through the Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund, which was established by the Academy in 2022 following receipt of a donation from the estate of Wilhelm Rechnitz. The donation was made by executor of the estate Mr Ralph O'Brien and brokered by his friend and former Academy President Professor Leon Mann AO FASSA. The Fund is managed by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia with guidance from a Fund Steering Committee and oversight of the Academy's Board. Further information on Dr Wilhelm Rechnitz and his legacy are included as an appendix to these guidelines.



Left to right: Otto, Wilhelm and Martha Rechnitz

NOMINATION PROCESS

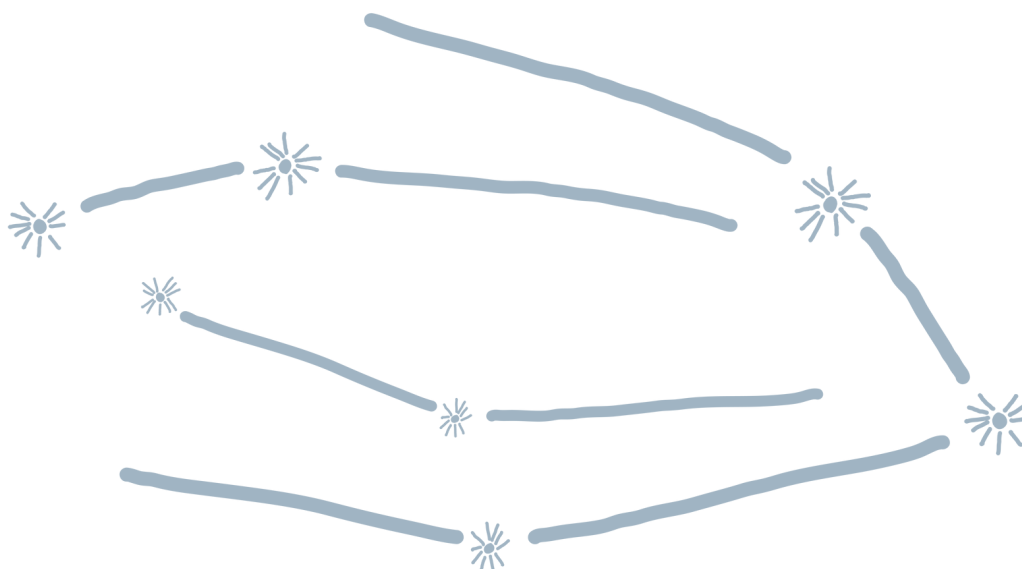
Nominations of outstanding Indigenous or non-Indigenous scholars for consideration for the Rechnitz Award must be submitted through a link on the Academy's website (available at <https://socialsciences.org.au/rechnitzaward>).

Nominations must be supported by two Fellows of either the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia or the Australian Academy of Humanities.

The nomination comprises:

- ☐ A nomination form setting out the case for the nominated scholar
- ☐ The name, position, and email address of two referees who have agreed to provide a referee's report in support of the nomination by the due date.
- ☐ A full CV for the nominee

Upon receipt of a nomination, the Academy will determine eligibility then proceed to contact the referees via email to request a referee report. The referee reports must be submitted by the referees via a Jotform link by the requested due date to be considered for the Award. If the referee reports are not received by the specified date, the nomination may not be considered for the award. Please refer to the guidelines for referees prior to proceeding with a nomination, found on pages seven and eight of this document.



ASSESSMENT OF NOMINATIONS

Each eligible nomination received will be reviewed by two referees, and will then be assessed by the Rechnitz Steering Committee which includes Indigenous expert reviewers.

Nominations will be assessed on the basis of excellence in research leadership and advancement of knowledge of Indigenous society, culture and language as demonstrated by:

- ☐ scholarly publication
- ☐ academic prizes, research grants, Fellowships and scholarships
- ☐ presentations at leading national and international conferences
- ☐ supervision and mentoring
- ☐ contributions to public policy
- ☐ contributions to public understanding, discourse and debate
- ☐ leadership roles with relevant organisations

The Academy reserves the right not to select a recipient for the Rechnitz Award in any given year.



2025 TIMELINE

27 MAY	Nominations OPEN.
15 AUGUST	Nominations CLOSE.
29 AUGUST	Final date for submission of referee reports.
SEPTEMBER	Rechnitz Steering Committee review nominations.
OCTOBER	Award nominees and nominators advised of the outcome.
17 NOVEMBER	The recipient will be invited to attend the Academy's gala dinner in Sydney to receive their award.
DECEMBER & INTO 2026	The Academy will work with the recipient to create an Academy-produced video on their work, and to deliver a Rechnitz Lecture within twelve months of receiving the award.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Rechnitz Award is open to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who have demonstrated excellence in research leadership and advancement of knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, culture and language.

Nominees do not necessarily have to hold a PhD or have been employed in academic positions, and nominations will be assessed on the basis of track record of relevant achievement, without regard to career stage.

To be eligible for consideration for the Rechnitz Award, nominees must be:

- ☐ An Australian citizen or permanent resident
- ☐ Endorsed by two Fellows of either the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and/or the Australian Academy of Humanities, as Proposer and Seconder
- ☐ The nominated scholar must not have previously won the Rechnitz Memorial Award.

The Rechnitz Award may be made posthumously, however nominees must be alive at the time of submission.



Wilhelm, Martha and Otto
Rechnitz
memorial fund

GUIDELINES FOR REFEREES

Upon receipt of a nomination, the Academy will determine eligibility, and for eligible nominees will then contact the referees listed in the nomination form via email to request a referee report. Nominators should ensure that the referees have agreed to provide a report in support of the nomination by the due date before listing them as referees in the nomination form.

Referees should have expertise and experience relevant to the nominee's field. Referees need not be Fellows of the Academy.

The importance of a detailed report

Please note, selection of the Rechnitz Award recipient is a highly competitive process. Unfortunately, brief referee reports that simply express the referee's support without providing much information about the merits of a candidate are generally not helpful to the assessing committee. In some cases, very brief referee reports may disadvantage a nominee in the selection process.

To ensure each nominee is considered fairly, we ask that referees commit to providing a detailed rationale for their support. This should include information on whether, and how, the nominee's achievements have made an impact or contribution to research leadership and advancement of knowledge in the fields of Indigenous society, culture and language and if so, why they are considered worthy of recognition by the Academy. As a guide, referee reports should be no more than two A4 pages in length.

Referees are asked to comment on the candidate's:

Impact on research leadership and knowledge advancement of Indigenous society, culture and language:

Referees should describe the impact of the candidate's research achievements or efforts to disseminate knowledge within the fields of Indigenous society, culture and language. Reports should be explicit about the original, innovative, and significant qualities of the nominee's work and the way in which it has influenced thinking or direction within the field(s). Indicators of impact may include but are not limited to: scholarly publications; development of new methods, concepts and theory that have advanced research practice; changes in the way bodies of knowledge are understood, organised and used (e.g. as a result of challenging previous conventional wisdom), and development of significant research capacity through supervision, mentoring, advocacy and leadership.

Contribution to public policy, professional practice, or public understanding of First Nations issues in Australia:

Referees should describe the impact that the nominee has had on public policy, professional practice, and/or public understanding of First Nations issues in Australia. Evidence or indicators of impact may include but are not limited to: changes in relevant public policy and/or government investment or operational strategy; changes to professional community practice; cultural or social change within communities; successful promulgation or uptake of new products, processes, IP, or services based on an innovation/new knowledge; publications and major reports; the championing of ideas and public discussion relating to First Nations issues and knowledge.

National/International Profile and Peer Recognition:

Referee reports should describe the nominee's national and/or international reputation including how the wider community has recognised the nominee's achievements and expertise. Evidence or indicators of profile and recognition include but are not limited to: invitations to speak at major conferences; research honours, awards and prizes; membership of prestigious organisations or committees; grants and Fellowships; journal editorships; service on advisory panels of leading national/international agencies and government/non-government organisations.

How to submit a referee report

Referees will be provided with a link via email, to a Jotform that is to be completed and submitted online.

Referee reports are confidential and viewed only by the assessing committee. The candidate and nominators will not be able to see the reports.

Referee reports must be submitted by the referees via the Jotform link by the specified due date to be considered by the Academy. If the referee reports are not received by the due date, the nomination may not be considered for the award.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who can submit a nomination for the Rechnitz Award?

Nominations can be prepared and submitted through the Jotform link by Academy Fellows or any other individual. However, they will not be deemed valid nominations unless endorsed by two Fellows of either the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia or the Australian Academy of Humanities, who endorse the nomination as 'Proposer' and 'Seconder'.

How do Fellows endorse a nomination?

The names and contact details of the two Fellows who have agreed to endorse the nomination as Proposer and Seconder must be entered on the nomination form. The submitter must confirm that consent has been sought from the endorsing Fellows, and endorsement will be verified by the Academy. A nomination that is not endorsed by two Fellows will be considered incomplete and will not be eligible for the award.

Will the person who submits a nomination receive confirmation of receipt?

Yes, the person who submits the online nomination will receive confirmation of receipt. As the nomination is completed on an online platform, please be sure to check your junk or spam folder if you do not initially receive your confirmation.

Do the referees have to be a Fellow of the Academy?

No, referees do not have to be a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia or the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Can a nominator also act as a referee?

Yes, either the nominator or the seconder (but not both) can also act as a referee.

When and how do referees submit their reports?

The name and email address of two referees who have agreed to provide a referee's report in support of the nomination must be included in the nomination form. Upon receipt of a nomination, the Academy will contact the referees via email to request a referee report. The referee reports must be submitted by the referees by the specified due date to be considered by the Academy. If the referee reports are not received by the due date, the nomination may not be considered for the award.

The referee reports are confidential and viewed only by the assessing committee. The candidate and nominators will not be able to see the reports.

Can a Fellow support more than one nomination for the Rechnitz Award?

Yes, there is no limit on the number of nominations a Fellow can endorse in any given year.

Do nominators have to be in the same discipline as the nominee?

No, nominators (or Fellows endorsing a nomination), do not have to be in the same discipline as the nominee.

When will I be notified of the outcome of my nomination?

Nominees and nominators will be notified of the nomination outcome following the assessment process.

When will the award be presented?

The Rechnitz Award will be presented to the recipient at a mutually agreed time following the decision on the Award. Preferably this will be at the Academy's annual gala dinner, however if the recipient is unable to attend the dinner, it may be presented at the time of the recipient's Rechnitz Lecture, or at another event.

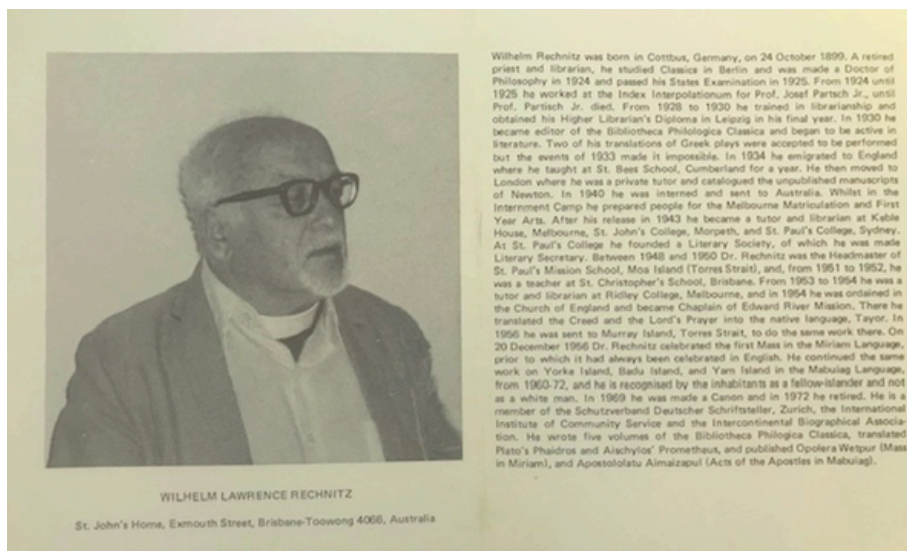
APPENDIX

History of the Wilhelm, Martha and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund

Dr. Wilhelm Rechnitz was born October 24, 1899 in Cottbus, Germany. He studied Classics at the University of Marburg (Doctorate 1924). In 1933 he fled to England, a refugee from Nazi Germany. In September 1939 when World War 2 broke out Wilhelm and another 2500 German refugees were declared "Enemy Aliens", interned in Britain, and in 1940 transported to Australia on the HMT Dunera. Wilhelm and the "Dunera Boys" were placed in internment camps in Hay NSW and Tatura Victoria. At the end of the war many of the Dunera Boys went on to build distinguished careers in Australia contributing significantly to the artistic, cultural, intellectual, and academic life of their new country.

Wilhelm Rechnitz lived and worked in the Torres Strait Islands over several periods from 1948-1972. A convert from Judaism to Christianity, he was ordained a priest in the Church of England. He moved between the Torres Strait Islands, where he translated Church services and scriptures into the indigenous languages. Wilhelm's education in Germany in Greek and Latin classics and librarianship informed his great interest in the native languages of the Torres Strait Islands. He became absorbed in the study of the cultures and lifestyle of the Island peoples. He wrote numerous articles about Indigenous languages and with a Kodak box camera compiled a substantial photographic record of Island culture. This rich collection of Rechnitz's material is held in the State Library of Queensland. Wilhelm Rechnitz retired to Brisbane in 1972, where he died in 1979.

Ralph O'Brien, a friend of Wilhelm Rechnitz since 1954 and as Trustee of his estate, has directed the donation from the Estate to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia to establish The Wilhelm, Martha, and Otto Rechnitz Memorial Fund to support the study and promotion of the languages and culture of Australian Indigenous peoples, with particular reference to, but not limited to, the Torres Straits Islands.



Dr. Wilhelm Rechnitz. St Johns Home Toowong, Brisbane