

# Booker Prize winning novelist 'ashamed to be Australian'

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Booker Prize winning novelist Richard Flanagan said he was "ashamed to be Australian" during a scathing attack on the environmental policies of his home nation.

Flanagan, 53, made the comments after being awarded the Man Booker Prize in London for his book *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, inspired by his father's experience as a prisoner of war.

The book tells the story of Dorrigo Evans, a surgeon imprisoned in a Japanese work camp on the Thailand-Burma railway.

In an interview with the BBC late Tuesday, he said Prime Minister Tony Abbott was being "foolish" in his declaration this week that "coal is good for humanity" when opening a new mine in Queensland state.

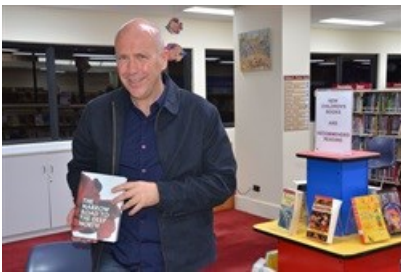


Image: [Wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Richard_Flanagan.jpg)

"Australia has the most extraordinary environment and I don't understand why our government seems committed to destroying what we have that's unique in the world," said Flanagan, a long-time campaigner for the preservation of old growth forest in Tasmania where he lives.

## Ashamed

"To be frank, I'm ashamed to be Australian when you bring this up."

Abbott made his remarks while opening a new BHP Billiton mine, just days after China's shock decision to impose a tariff on resource-rich Australian coal.

"It's very important that we sustain our faith in coal," Abbott said.

"Coal is vital for the future energy needs of the world. Energy is critical if the world is to continue to grow and prosper," the prime minister said. "So let's have no demonisation of coal."

## A polluter of note

Australia is among the world's worst per capita polluters due to its reliance on coal-fired power and mining exports.

Despite his criticism Flanagan, the third Australian to win the Booker Prize, which includes a trophy and an award of £50,000 (\$80,000, €63,000), was praised by Arts Minister George Brandis.

"This accolade recognises not only Richard's wonderful writing and imagination, but is a reflection of the quality of Australian literature," he said.

"Australians will be immensely proud of Richard's achievement."

Flanagan, who left school at 16, worked on the novel for 12 years, and his father died the day that it was finished.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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