

MILES FRANKLIN LITERARY AWARD

22 June 2011

KIM SCOTT WINS 2011 MILES FRANKLIN LITERARY AWARD

Author awarded prestigious literary prize for 'That Deadman Dance'

The Trust Company, as trustee, and the 2011 judges have announced that Kim Scott is this year's winner of the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award.

At the Miles Franklin Award dinner held at the State Library of Victoria this evening, the multi-award winning author received his second Miles Franklin Literary Award for *That Deadman Dance*. Scott was a winner of the 2000 Miles Franklin Literary Award for his novel, *Benang*.

The Miles Franklin, recognised as Australia's most illustrious literary prize, was established in 1954 through the will of *My Brilliant Career* author, Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, to encourage and support writers of Australian literature. The annual award is presented to the novel of the year which is of the highest literary merit and "presents Australian life in any of its phases". This year the prize value has increased to \$50,000 from \$42,000 last year.

"*That Deadman Dance* is an astonishingly original work by a writer who can imagine and project possibility where most of us can see only stark, adversarial conflict. The novel is both realistic and visionary, an historical-lyrical recreation of early encounters between black and white on the south coast of Western Australia, and one that shifts our understanding of what an historical novel can do. It is a grand feat of transformative storytelling", said Morag Fraser AM, speaking on behalf of the 2011 judging panel, which also includes Richard Neville, State Library of New South Wales (NSW) Mitchell Librarian, Lesley McKay, Murray Waldren, and Professor Gillian Whitlock.

Published by Picador, *That Deadman Dance* is set in the early nineteenth century in the area that is now Albany, Western Australia. Described as a "powerful" and "innovative" work of fiction, the must-read tale explores the early contact between the Aboriginal Noongar people and the first European settlers.

A joint winner of the 2000 Miles Franklin Literary Award with Thea Astley (for her novel, *Drylands*), Scott was the first Indigenous Australian to win the award.

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Born in 1957, Scott's ancestral Noongar country is the south-east coast of Western Australia between Gairdner River and Cape Arid. His cultural Elders use the term Wirlomin to refer to their clan, and the Norman Tindale nomenclature identifies people of this area as Wudjari/Koreng.

When the shortlist was announced in April this year, Perth-based Scott was joined by another previous Miles Franklin Literary Award winner, Roger McDonald, for *When Colts Ran* (Vintage, Random House Australia) and rising literary star, Chris Womersley for his second novel, *Bereft* (Scribe Publications).

“When we came to our final decision, these three novels stood out, like beacons. They break ground. They are memorable, moving, and they bring us unforgettable, sometimes disconcerting characters. They incise a sense of place, have a distinctive voice, and display a formidable ability to bring their version of our past, with all its resonance for our future, to vivid life,” commented Morag Fraser, for the judges.

In an unprecedented move this year, the award event moved interstate from Sydney to Melbourne. This evening, John Atkin, CEO of The Trust Company, trustee of the award, announced that next year the winner presentation will be held in Brisbane, Queensland.

Speaking on behalf of The Trust Company, he said: “We are delighted to present another year of the Miles Franklin Literary Award, and congratulate this year's winner. It has been an exciting year for the Miles Franklin as we continue our efforts to refresh the award and grow its reach, through a number of new initiatives. We're particularly pleased to launch this evening a dedicated website and exhibition celebrating Miles Franklin, her legacy, and Australian literature.”

This year's innovative award program also included shortlist events in Brisbane, an Oration in partnership with the University of Melbourne featuring 2010 winner Peter Temple and a partnership with Vision Australia.

The Vision Australia Braille Book of the Year Award in association with the Miles Franklin Literary Award will be announced on World Sight Day on 13 October. Following the 2011 Miles Franklin shortlist being made available in Braille, the winner of the Braille Book of the Year will be chosen from that shortlist by Vision Australia clients who are blind or have low vision.

www.milesfranklin.com.au

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For further information (bios, shortlist judges' report, synopses etc), images or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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About the Miles Franklin Literary Award:

The Trust Company Limited is trustee of the Franklin Fund and responsible for honouring the legacy of Miles Franklin through the administration and promotion of the Miles Franklin Literary Award. The Award was set up in 1954 through a bequest from *My Brilliant Career* author Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin. Celebrating Australian character and creativity, the Award was established to support authors for the advancement, improvement and betterment of Australian literature. It was first awarded to Patrick White in 1957 for his novel, *Voss*.

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