

# Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature

## Announcement of the Eighteenth Annual Awards (for books published in 2004)

The annual prize of \$1000 in the Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature is to be awarded to Pauline Luke for *Amber Pash on Pink*, published by UQP. This story is told by 14-year-old Rebecca through e-mails, poetry, letters, recipes and narrative. One of the book's strengths is its well-drawn characters who negotiate adjustments around the interweaving themes of separation, step-parenting, blended families, extended families, grief and loss, adolescent relationships and friendships. These themes are brought together in an easily readable and interesting manner.

The \$1000 Young Readers/Picture Book Award was not awarded this year. Of the picture books and books for younger readers submitted for the award, none met the criteria.

### Books Useful for Therapists

The following books tell stories which may enhance therapists' insight into specific problem areas. The committee strongly recommends that therapists read these selections critically before deciding whether they are appropriate to share with their particular clients. Because of the sensitive nature of some of these books it is important, if they are used, that they be only one tool within an ongoing therapeutic relationship — inclusion in this list does not mean a book is recommended as a self-help book.

### Picture Books

*A Very Important Story*, by Julie Kingston, published by Hodder Childrens Books. A young boy quizzes his grandfather about all the important things he has done in his life. The relationship between the grandfather and his grandson is affirmed as the most important thing.

*When It Is Time*, by Stacey McCleary, illustrated by Sally Rippen. Published by Lothian. 'For all those who knew the time would come ...' Sakura watches the mother hen sit on her egg ...

*Taming Butterflies*, by Sue Whiting, illustrated by Mini Goss. Published by New Frontier. Tilly experiences butterflies in her tummy. Lots of things trigger these butterflies, until an elderly lady helps her develop ways to quieten them. NOTE: Committee members expressed concern because the elderly lady appears to be a stranger to Tilly.

*Too Many Monkeys*, by Margaret Wild and Sally Rippen. Published by Omnibus Books. More and more members join the nuclear monkey family and the family just keeps squashing up to accommodate them. A lovely story about the inclusivity of family.

### Books for Older Readers

*No Strings*, by Krista Bell, published by Lothian. The theme is separated families. Felix searches for a sense of belonging.

*Leaving Jetty Road*, by Rebecca Burton, published by Angus & Robertson. Three girls struggle with identity and relationships. Eating disorders are described from friends' perspective.

*Kalpana's Dream*, by Judith Clarke, published by Allen & Unwin. A crosscultural and crossgenerational story of a feisty lady from a remote village in India who defies stereotyping and cultural mores to travel to Australia in order to reconnect with her great-granddaughter.

*Paper Bags & Dreams*, by Fran Dobbie, published by Hodder. Short stories explore the physical and emotional changes of puberty in a girl being raised by her Aboriginal grandparents.

*Soraya The Storyteller*, by Rosanne Hawke, published by Lothian. The Afghani tales, interwoven with Soraya's experiences of being in Australia, keep her memories alive as she starts a new life under the shadow of the temporary protection visa. *Soraya* is an excellent example of the use of narrative therapy, in which the vigour of the human spirit prevails and stories have healing power.

*A Horse Called Elvis*, by John Heffernan, published by Scholastic. A wonderful offbeat story about an amazingly dysfunctional family who show remarkable resilience!

*The Spare Room*, by Kathryn Lomer, published by UQP. Akiri, a Japanese exchange student, finds himself in an unwelcoming Australian host family that he can't make sense of. In time, this family's unresolved grief surfaces and connects Akiri with his own grief and self-discovery.

*A Marathon of her Own: The Diary of Sophia Krikonis*, published by Scholastic. This *Diary* records 12-year-old Sophia's move from Crete with her mother and siblings to join the father who moved two years previously. Sophia encounters prejudice and indifference, but strong support from her family and a teacher help her to adjust to life in Melbourne. An engaging historical depiction of migration in 1955.

*Princess Tamsin*, by Annette Wickes, published by Scholastic. Tamsin has to adjust to relocation after her parents' separation. A shared goal (saving an ancient gum tree in the schoolyard) facilitates a more respectful relationship both within the family and the community.

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