



SYDNEY PEN AWARD 2006

**AWARDED TO ROSIE SCOTT BY SYDNEY PEN PRESIDENT
ANGELA BOWNE SC AT SYDNEY PEN'S DAY OF THE
IMPRISONED WRITER EVENT ON 12 NOVEMBER 2006 AT
GLEEBOOKS, GLEBE POINT ROAD, GLEBE NSW**

I have great pleasure in awarding the inaugural Sydney PEN Award to Rosie Scott.

The Sydney PEN Award was instituted in 2006 to acknowledge outstanding work by a Sydney PEN member in support of PEN's aims. The Award has been made possible by the generosity of Sydney PEN member Jane Morgan and the support of Mr Charles Wolf of The Pen Shop, Sydney.

Rosie Scott is a very influential writer. She has published six critically acclaimed novels and a large number of short stories, essays and articles in numerous national and international magazines and anthologies. In 2004, her novel, *Faith Singer* was listed, along with Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, among the "50 Essential Contemporary Reads by Living Writers" in a survey conducted by the Orange Prize committee and Hay Literary Festival and sponsored by *The Guardian*. Only two other Australian writers were listed, JM Coetzee and Tim Winton. *Faith Singer* was also voted one of the 120 favourite Australian books ever published in an Australian Society of Authors survey in 2003.

But Rosie has been influential in many other ways and, in particular, through her work for Sydney PEN. Rosie joined Sydney PEN in the 1990s and has been a driving force ever since. She was elected to Sydney PEN's Management Committee in 1999 and served on it until 2006. In that role, she developed close relations between PEN and the ASA (of which she was an executive committee member and chair for a number of years) and she was active in most other areas of PEN's work.

With the Tampa crisis in 2001, Rosie, with a small group of Sydney PEN committee members, helped to organise a newspaper advertising campaign featuring thousands of signatories calling for change of refugee policy. She worked to raise the profile of this issue, including with the Refugee Council of Australia, and assisted many individual detainees and writers.

In November 2001, she organised PEN's Day of the Imprisoned Writer event at Gleebooks which focused on the plight of asylum seekers in detention in Australia. In the presence of luminaries such as Ariel Dorfman and Ruth Cracknell, we heard a message from Amer Sultan, an Iraqi detainee in Villawood, making a link between International PEN's global and historic mission and the situation of detained refugees in Australia. This signified the beginning of the major extension of Sydney PEN's Writers in Prison work to Writers in Detention in Australia, in which Rosie played such a crucial role.

In 2002, Rosie became Vice-President of Sydney PEN and worked with Tom Keneally on the newly formed Writers in Detention subcommittee. The work of this subcommittee included numerous public events and media interviews, and finally the production of *Another Country*, an anthology of writing by Australian detainees edited by Rosie and Tom and published in 2004.

In 2004 Sydney PEN was awarded a Human Rights Community Award for its work. The judges credited PEN with an effective campaign of raising asylum seeker issues within the Australian conscience and said it was able to bring national and international pressure to bear in seeking the release of asylum seekers in detention. The judges noted that the 2001 Day of the Imprisoned Writer had focused on the plight of asylum seekers in detention and that PEN had edited *Another Country*.

Rosie was at the centre of that work throughout, inspirational, tireless, creative, utterly committed and highly effective. She has shown how a writer can be a powerful activist. She made a huge and essential contribution to the work of Sydney PEN and continues to do so.

Angela Bowne SC
President, Sydney PEN