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EMBARGOED UNTIL 6.00 PM ON 3 JUNE

Kibble Award for Women Writers presented to Jacqueline Kent

Perpetual Limited (Perpetual), co-trustee of the Nita B Kibble Literary Award for Women Writers (the Kibble Award), has named Ms Jacqueline Kent as the winner of the 2009 Kibble Award for her novel *An Exacting Heart: the Story of Hephzibah Menuhin*.

Perpetual's Managing Director, Mr David Deverall, said the \$25,000 Award had been established 15 years ago by Ms Nita May Dobbie to recognise achievements in women's literature.

"Since its inception, a number of Australia's leading female writers have been the recipients of the Kibble Award," Mr Deverall said. "This is the second time Ms Kent has won the Kibble Award, the first time being in 2002, so it really is an outstanding achievement."

Ms Jerelynn Brown, Chair of the judging panel for the Kibble Award, said Ms Kent had combined her professional and empathetic approach with a brilliant and dynamic subject: concert pianist, Hephzibah Menuhin.

"In her nuanced and vital portrayal, Ms Kent has revealed how a young woman of the world came to be a loving wife and mother, and why she moved on."

An Exacting Heart: the Story of Hephzibah Menuhin was published in 2008 by Penguin Viking. Other authors short-listed for the 2009 Kibble Award included Ms Georgia Blain for *Births, Deaths Marriages* and Ms Kathleen Stewart for *The After Life – a Memoir*.

The 2009 Dobbie Encouragement Award for a first published work was presented to Ms Claire Thomas for her book *Fugitive Blue*.

Ms Brown said *Fugitive blue* was a story about the restoration of a small Renaissance painting by an unknown artist and a young Melbourne conservator.

"Ms Thomas evokes fresh and vivid images that resonate with the reader long after the novel is finished. *Fugitive blue* is intricately structured and written with originality and poise," she said.

Other authors short-listed for the Dobbie Award were Ms Darleen Bungey for *Arthur Boyd: a Life* and Ms Toni Jordan for *Addition*.

Mr Deverall said the Awards were a great example of how a private philanthropic act can provide a sustainable form of financial support for many years to come.

"These Awards raise awareness of private sector giving and, importantly, demonstrate the ongoing and growing contribution it can make to the arts," he said. "We are very pleased to have been able to increase the prize money this year. This is particularly important to the arts sector, which is unfortunately feeling the impact of declining corporate sponsorship with the continuation of the economic downturn," he said.

The winners for both Awards were announced today at a presentation at the State Library of NSW. The judging panel for the Awards comprises Ms Jerelynn Brown (Chair), State Library of New South Wales; Professor Robert Dixon BA (Hons), PhD (Sydney), FAHA, Professor of Australian Literature, University of Sydney; and author, Ms Jean Bedford.

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Background

Ms Nita May Dobbie was born on 21 August 1904 in Maitland, New South Wales. She worked as a librarian and research officer at the Standards Association of Australia for 33 years, retiring in 1972.

A writer herself, Ms Dobbie was concerned with the difficulties faced by female writers and recognised the need to foster women's writing in the community.

In her will, she established the Nita B Kibble Literary Award in the name of her aunt who raised her. Ms Nita Bernice Kibble was the first woman to be appointed a librarian with the State Library of New South Wales and held the position of Principal Research Officer from 1919 until her retirement in 1943. Miss Kibble was a founding member of the Australian Institute of Librarians.

In addition, Ms Dobbie established the Dobbie Encouragement Award for a first published work by a female writer.

Ms Dobbie founded the Awards to benefit women writers of a published book of fiction or non-fiction, classified as 'life writing', to advance Australian literature and to help provide incentive to female writers. It can only be awarded to a female author of a work written and published during the period of the Award, and which also describes day to day Australian life.

Perpetual Limited and Mr Bryan Small are co-trustees for the Awards. Since 1994 Perpetual has distributed nearly \$300,000 to some of Australia's leading female authors.

For more information visit www.perpetual.com.au/philanthropy