



INTERNATIONAL BOARD ON BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Press Release – Embargoed until Saturday, 31st March.

## **Ena Noël Award 2012: IBBY Australia Encouragement Award for Children’s Literature**

*Omega Park* by Amy Barker, published by University of Queensland Press

The judges were unanimous in choosing Amy Barker’s debut novel, the engaging story of two boys growing up in Omega Park, a housing commission estate where lives are impoverished in every sense of the word. For kids like Jacob and Dingo every day is a battle for survival, not made any easier by the fact that this estate is on the edge of the glitzy and prosperous Gold Coast.

The story is told from two points of view – that of Jacob, who lies dying after a car accident, and the younger Dingo who has witnessed the accident and knows Jacob mostly by reputation. As simmering tensions between police and Parkees rise, the writer uses filmic ‘then and now’ scenes to reveal the truth of lives endured in this place of absent or addictive parents. The two boys are on a path which might go either way for Dingo, but which for Jacob only ever had one possible ending. The power of this narrative lies in the fact that as we mourn for one boy, we feel a mixture of fear and hope for the other. Dingo has had some advantages: parents who care for him, a talent for surfing . . . Will they be enough to rescue him from a similar fate?

The judges found this book to be not only a moving exposition of a credibly evoked world, but a true tragedy; despite the reader’s knowledge from the start of the eventual outcome (for Jacob), the layers of despair are built up throughout. The note of optimism at the end provides both a balance and some relief for the reader, who has come to care deeply about these characters.

The Ena Noël Award is given biennially as an encouragement award for young, emerging Australian authors/illustrators of children’s and YA books. It honours Ena Noël, founding president of IBBY Australia. Previous winners are listed at:

<http://ibbyaustralia.wordpress.com/ena-noel-award/>

Further details available from

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