



DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

communiqué

No.:
No.: 18

DIFFUSION:
RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 22, 1979

CANADA/AUSTRALIA LITERARY AWARD WINNER

It was announced jointly today by the Department of External Affairs, the Canada Council and the Australia Council that the winner of the Canada/Australia Literary Prize for 1978 is the Australian poet Thomas Shapcott. The prize, valued at \$2,500.00 Canadian, is intended to help make better known in Australia and Canada the work of each other's writers. This is the third year that the prize has been awarded. Australian playwright, John Romeril, received the inaugural award in 1976 and Canadian writer, Alice Munro, was the 1977 winner. Each year an Australian or Canadian writer is chosen by a panel of judges from the other country. This year the Australia Council submitted works by six authors to the Canadian jury. Next year the procedure will be reversed.

The prize is not restricted to any particular category of writing; novelists, poets and playwrights are equally eligible. It is awarded for a writer's total output rather than for a single work. The prize is financed on the Australian side by the Australia Council and on the Canadian side by the Department of External Affairs as part of its programme of cultural relations with foreign countries. The award is administered for the Department by the Writing and Publishing Section of the Canada Council.

Born in 1936, in Ipswich, Queensland, Thomas Shapcott as poet, anthologist, and critic is considered to be one of the most influential of present-day Australian poets. His published works include eight selections of poetry, and a monograph on Australian artist Charles Blackman. He has also edited two and co-edited one anthology of contemporary American and Australian verse. His extensive travels in the USA and Britain, both as a Churchill Fellow and privately, have enabled him to create contacts of great value to Australian poets. Mr. Shapcott served on the Literature Board of the Australia Council between 1973 and 1976.

As part of the Canada/Australia award, each recipient is invited to visit the host country. Last year's winner, Canadian writer Alice Munro, will be visiting Australia next month as the guest of the Australia Council.