

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE6245

## Harwood, Gwendoline (Gwen) Nessie

(1920 - 1995)

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**Born** 8 June, 1920, Brisbane Queensland Australia

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**Died** 5 December, 1995, HobartHobart Tasmania Australia

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**Occupation** Poet

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### Details

Gwendoline Nessie Foster was educated at Toowong State School and Brisbane Girls' Grammar School. After school, Gwen studied piano and composition and gained a music teachers diploma. She was also the organist at All Saints Church, Brisbane. Gwen taught for a brief period before obtaining a position as a typist in the War Damage Commission in 1942.

After Gwen's marriage to linguist William Harwood in 1945, the pair moved to Tasmania, where Gwen taught music, worked as medical secretary and raised a family.

From the 1960s, Gwen's poetry and writing frequently appeared in Australian literary journals, and her first poetry volume was published in 1963. In 1973 Gwen received a Literature Board Grant, which enabled her to devote much more of her time to writing.

In addition to poetry, Gwen has also written libretti and choral works, some still unpublished. A number of her poems have also been set to music. Altogether, Gwen has published approximately 430 works, some of which have been published under pseudonyms.

Gwen served as president of both the Tasmanian Branch of the Fellowship of Australian Writers and the Lady Hamilton Literary Society. She was the recipient of numerous awards, including the Victorian Premiers Award (1989) and the 1990 Age Book of the Year Award. Gwen also received honorary doctorates from La Trobe University, the University of Tasmania and the University of Queensland.

In 1989 Gwen was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) 'for service to literature, particularly as a poet and librettist'. She was also inducted into the inaugural Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women in 1995.

The Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize was established in 1996.

## Events

### **1989 - 1989**

Victorian Premier's Literary Awards – The C. J. Dennis Prize for Poetry

### **1975 - 1975**

Grace Leven Poetry Prize

### **1960 - 1960**

Meanjin Poetry Prize

### **1959 - 1959**

Meanjin Poetry Prize

### **2005 - 2005**

### **1994 - 1994**

Cholmondeley Award

### **1978 - 1978**

Patrick White Award

### **1977 - 1977**

Robert Frost Medallion

### **1990 - 1990**

The Age Book of the Year Award – Non-Fiction Prize

### **1990 - 1990**

Festival Awards for Literature (SA) – John Bray Award for Poetry

## Archival resources

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of Gwen Harwood, 1889-1982 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Correspondence 1954-1960 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letters from Gwen Harwood, 1976-1991 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Cassandra Pybus, 1956-2008 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Literary papers 1969-1981 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection**

[Gwen Harwood interviewed by Suzanne Walker \[sound recording\]](#)

[Gwen Harwood interviewed by Diana Ritch \[sound recording\]](#)

[Gwen Harwood interviewed by Alison Hoddinott \[sound recording\]](#)

[Gwen Harwood recites poetry in the Hazel de Berg collection \[sound recording\]](#)

[Gwen Harwood reads her poetry for the Australia Council \[sound recording\] / recorded by Roger MacDonald](#)

### **National Library of Australia**

[\[Biographical cuttings on Gwen Harwood, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

### **Archives Office of Tasmania**

[Minutes, copies of papers, scrapbook, attendance lists and associated records](#)

### **Academy Library, UNSW Canberra**

[Gwen Harwood and Ann Jennings manuscript collection](#)

### **Fryer Library, The University of Queensland**

[Gwen Harwood Papers, collected by Tony Riddell](#)

[Father Alan Farrell Correspondence](#)

[Helen Mills Papers](#)

[Alison Hoddinott Papers](#)

[Gregory Kratzmann Papers](#)

[Letter, 1968 Jan 11 South Perth, Western Australia to Gwen Harwood.](#)

[Gwen Harwood Papers](#)

[Letter, 29 Apr 1986 : to Revd. A.P.B. Bennie.](#)

### **Author Details**

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