

Country Party. At the general election in September 1940 Labor and the UAP/Country Party tied with thirty six seats each. There were two independents who initially supported the government but the political landscape was highly unstable. On the UAP side the Country Party had refused to serve under Menzies and on the Labor side there were still two separate groups, the official ALP and Lang Labor from New South Wales. At a time when Europe had been overrun by the German armies and Britain was fighting for its life, Canberra remained as

detached from reality as it is in many ways today.

Menzies spent most of the first half of 1941 in London where he attended meetings at the British war cabinet. He returned to Australia in mid-year but in August was forced to resign by his UAP colleagues. If three of his strongest supporters had not been lost a year earlier, this vote might have taken a different course. In any event, Country Party leader, Arthur Fadden took over as prime minister but in early October the two independent

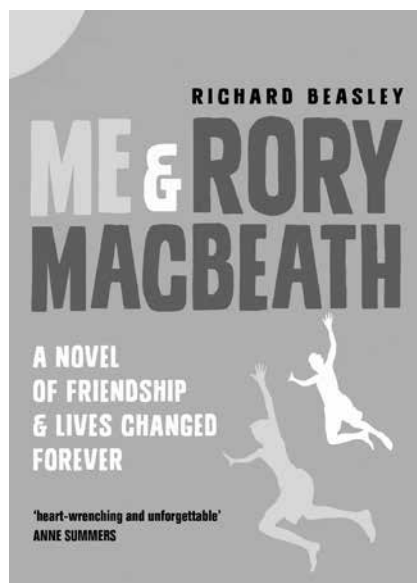
members withdrew their support from the government and John Curtin became prime minister in a Labor administration which was to survive, albeit without Curtin himself, until December 1949.

This book provides a fascinating interplay of law and politics and the author's extensive research has not inhibited his highly readable style. It is simply an excellent piece of work.

**Review by Michael Sexton SC**

## Me and Rory Macbeath

By Richard Beasley | Hachette Australia | 2013



The seemingly endless summer holidays of our childhood: there are surely few periods in our lives that we remember with more nostalgia. Australian summer holidays, idled away with other

local children at the beach or in neighbours' pools, and fueled by sausage rolls and meat pies, calippos and paddlepops, seem particularly evocative in retrospect.

Richard Beasley's new novel, *Me & Rory Macbeath*, begins with a kind of homage to those summer holidays of our childhood, as its narrator, the now grown-up Jake Taylor, describes the summer of 1977 - 1978, when he was twelve years old and living on Rose Avenue in the suburbs of Adelaide. Jake's depiction of that summer is almost palpable, and is replete with games of front-yard cricket, terrifying encounters with ten-metre diving platforms, and molten roads that scold bare feet as his band of local boys walk home. It is a beautiful start to the story (which is part coming-of-age,

part courtroom drama), and also a clever one, as it lulls the reader into feeling that very sense of 'vague yet secure optimism' which Jake identifies as coming over him and his best mate, Robbie, around the time they turned twelve.

Rory Macbeath is the youngest child of the Macbeath family, who has recently arrived from Glasgow and moved into Number 1 Rose Avenue, described by Jake as the worst house in the street. It is the entry of Rory into Jake and Robbie's world which changes things for Jake, at first only subtly, with the unsettling shift in dynamic that takes place when a long-established duet becomes a trio, and then radically and irrevocably, as the Macbeath family takes centre stage on Rose Avenue. As Jake learns more about Rory and his family, the pace of the novel

