

## **THE BLACKENED BILLY VERSE COMPETITION – 2011**

### **Judge's Comments**

It was my great pleasure to adjudicate 288 entries in the 2011 Blackened Billy Verse Competition. I continue to be amazed by the quality of entries each year. And this means my task becomes increasingly difficult on each occasion.

Imagine the amount of time given by writers to create entries that embrace our lifestyle and heritage with such clarity and vision. It was interesting to read and re-read narratives of bush lifestyle, hardships, history, love stories, and the beauty of our Country. Such clever prose and imagery is outstanding. This is coupled with great rhythm, rhyme and well-structured meter contained in a majority of the entries.

There were eighty four final entries selected from those submitted, before commencing further elimination. Then a final forty four before the emotional decisions were made to arrive at the three place getters and the ten highly commended entries.

Thank you to all of the entrants. Be assured that every single entry receives the painstaking attention it deserves. Please continue to enter this Competition and keep up the fine tradition of written work.

Once again, thanks to the hard working Jan Morris and her diligence in the organisation of the Blackened Billy competition each year. I would also like to pay tribute to the ABPA and the many Bush Poetry organisations throughout the country who work so hard. There are many people involved who are responsible for keeping the great tradition of Bush Poetry alive and well. Congratulations to you all.

### **FIRST PLACE: A BUSHMAN'S LAST FAREWELL by CATHERINE CLARKE, South Nilhande Atoll, Republic of Maldives**

This is a beautifully crafted story of a bushman who is coming to the end of his life and feels the need to eulogise the wonderment of his experiences before he passes on. He chooses the appropriate setting for the final scene with only his faithful dog and horse as his final companions. The writer's strong imagery, balanced meter and descriptive illustrations are fascinating, and cleverly sustain the narrative to its soulful climax. This is the work of a gifted picture writer and a fitting winner of the Blackened Billy for 2011.

### **SECOND PLACE: LUNATIC, THE COURIER by ELLIS CAMPBELL, Dubbo, NSW**

From the opening stanza, the writer enthral us with the description of the epic ride through floodwaters by the stockman, Billy Mateer, to warn people of oncoming danger to themselves and their homes. The reader can visualize the near impossible task involved. I was engrossed with the descriptive phrasing, and the use of strong adjectives to describe this hazardous task. The writer has used alternate rhyme for effect, clever stress sounds and meter and appropriate imagery. A wonderful creative effort to describe this prominent event in our past history.

### **THIRD PLACE: SUMO MICK by BOB MAGOR, Myponga, SA**

This entry had my keen attention from the very first line and retained it to the end. The Ringer, Sumo Mick has really involved himself in something big, taking on a Japanese Sumo wrestler during his trip to the city, and the writer expertly outlines every crushing detail of Mick's engagement with his beefy opponent. The reader can almost experience the excruciating pain with some of the grips Mick inflicts on his opponent. The writer has cleverly made use of alliteration and perfect meter to portray the active stress and motion required for such a ballad. A very clever piece of writing.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED**

CATHERINE CLARKE – Plea of my People

DAVID CAMPBELL – A Love Story

TERRY PIGGOTT – The Ugly Side of Drought

BRENDA-JOY PRITCHARD – Legacy of a Bushfire

CAROL HEUCHAN – Lunatic

VERONICA WEAL – Trapped

VAL WALLACE – Murdo McKenzie's Ghost

MAX MERCKENSCHLAGER – PM Ariel, Police Grey

CATHERINE CLARKE – Special Connection

WILL MOODY – Clearance Sale