

2023 THE CLONCURRY POETRY PRIZE

OPEN RESULTS

1st – Remembering Mary by Penny Lane

2nd – Heroes of Yesterday by Tom McIlveen

HC – Unsung Heroes by David Campbell

HC – The Women of the Outback by Bronwyn Blake

JUDGES' REPORT

Overall Competition

Thank you to the Mayor of Cloncurry, Greg Campbell and to all concerned with the 2023 Cloncurry Poetry Prize.

In this third year of its running, the adult open competition attracted entries from all over Australia and beyond. The standard of poems written in both rhymed and metered 'Bush Poetry' and in Free Verse, was very high befitting the ever-growing status of this competition. The prize has fast become one of Australia's leading and most sought after poetry awards.

Cloncurry Shire Council is to be commended for its on-going commitment to reflecting the spirit of the outback and its heroes through the support it gives to this uniquely Australian art form.

This year's specific theme of the Cloncurry Poetry Prize was 'Outback Heroes' and they emerged in print as those of the past and as those of the present. From indigenous peoples to explorers, shearers and cattlemen, to war veterans, truckies, community workers, the 'Flying Doctors' medicos. and para-medics to policemen and firefighters and more on to everyday men, women, children and animals enduring the trials and tribulations, joys and sharing generated through and intensified by the harsh conditions of the majestic region they call home.

Of the top five poems, three honour and acknowledge the role that the women of the land have played in the dramas of outback life. For those who know the region and its challenges, these heroic co-workers reflect the history of many of the families of the region through the grandmothers, mothers, aunts and members who have often, from behind the scenes, woven the family and community threads together.

While there were so many great stories told, the three place-getting poems are also outstanding with respect to the poetic skills used to convey their messages.

1st Place Getter – Winner of the 2023 Cloncurry Poetry Prize

Remembering Mary by Penny Lane

Portraying the strength of a woman of courage and resourcefulness, this outstanding free verse poem paints vivid, pictorial images. The subject of the poem, 'Mary', is brought to life through unusual word combinations, succinct phraseology and skilful use of language. An evocative poem that leaves no doubt as to the stoic, enduring, no-nonsense character of its heroine but that also leaves us with the sense of her sacrifice of self to survival. Typifying the struggles of early female pioneers who helped lay the foundations for life today, the character of Mary is a tribute to all those who endured and is symbolic of outback womanhood.

2nd Place Getter – Runner Up in the 2023 Cloncurry Poetry Prize

Heroes of Yesterday by Tom McIlveen

This is a beautiful, lyric poem employing excellent skills of accurate rhyme and metre to express, with rhythmic flow, the colours and extremes of the Queensland outback.

Focussing on heroes of exploration, this poem is both relevant to Cloncurry's past and to the spirit of endurance and resourcefulness that permeates modern outback life.

Highly Commended 2023 Cloncurry Poetry Prize

Unsung Heroes by David Campbell

This content of this poem conveys a wealth of harsh experiences that the women of past eras faced, often as the only adult, rearing children in isolated conditions. The poet has utilised the skills of accurate rhyme and consistent metre flavoured with enjambment to give rhythmic flow to this poignant account of survival. The poem also brings in the inherent beauty of the outback which acts as a salve giving inner strength in times of reflection.

Highly Commended 2023 Cloncurry Poetry Prize

The Women of the Outback by Bronwyn Blake

This poem's strength is in its historical perspective. In relaying stories across four generations of women, it could relate to many of the region's families who have established roots in the Outback. Immigrating from afar, integrating and learning survival skills from the first nation's people, going forth into careers to help others who live in isolation, enduring wars... the range of perspectives captures the humanity and honours and appreciates the role that women have played in shaping outback society. An excellent concept.