

By Georgina Swan

As stockwhips woke the echoes, they gathered at Banjo's Block to celebrate the tradition that gave rise to the Man From Snowy River festival - bush poetry and music.

Performers gathered from across the country including the Northern Territory and Western Australia, with stories to tell and a unifying love of rhythm and rhyme. For the audience, it was a chance to pay homage to Banjo Paterson's iconic poem, to hear favourite classic verses and to discover new poets and works, where humour mingles effortlessly with poignancy to create something special and enduring. For the performers, it was an opportunity to do what they do best - to entertain and compete on a stage like no other.

The days began with the 'Poet's Breakfast' around the campfire with a cuppa. Those keen to recite could walk up and have a go, or you could sit back and enjoy the show with friends old and new. Music and prose continued throughout the day, culminating in the evenings with special performances such as the Man From Snowy River recital competition (won this year by Seamus Foley), comedy tales, modern poem recitals, bush band performances and campfire sessions. It's a genial respite from the bustle of the main arena for festival goers - back to where it all began with story telling and a yarn.

In what has quickly become tradition, the poets gathered around the bronze statue of Jack Riley in Hanson St, after the street parade, for a raucous retelling of the poem (pictured), to the delight of onlookers and market-goers.

The event culminated with the Carol Reffold Memorial One Minute Poem competition, where entrants had to incorporate a line from the Man From Snowy River: "a household word today" or use the topic

‘Corryong characters’. This year’s winner, determined by audience applause, was David Stanley for his poem about poet Phil McManus.

A very big thank you to everybody who helped make this year’s programme such a success, and special thanks to Maureen Thomas, Graeme Johnson, Jan Lewis and the festival committee for their organisation & support.