



# A.B.P.A.

**Australian Bush Poets Association**

**Volume 26 No. 5**

**October/November 2020**



***Well Done Aussies!***

# Illawarra Breakfast Poets

present

## 'The Kembla Flame' 2021

Written Bush Poetry Competition  
First \$300 - Second \$200  
and Two equal awards of  
\$100 \$100

Also a Novice \$100 Award for Novice writer of Bush Poetry.

Total Prize Money is \$900

Competition is for poetry with good rhyme and  
metre - about Australia or our way of life.

Junior Section (new for this year) under 18 years at  
closing date of Competition. \$100 and Certificate.

.Results of Competition announced at

Illawarra BreakfastPoet's

Friday session, of Illawarra Folk Festival, 15th January 2021.

Closing date for entries, 24th Dec. 2020.

\$6 per poem or 3 for \$10.

*please send 3 copies ... for entry form*

*www.abpa.org.au - events page or*

*email zondraeking@gmail.com 0401160137*



### 50<sup>th</sup> BRONZE SWAGMAN AWARD FOR BUSH VERSE 2021

ENTRY NOW OPEN

Be part of history. Pen a verse or two or three  
and enter the 2021 competition.



Entries close 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021

See [www.bronzeswagman.info](http://www.bronzeswagman.info)  
or contact

Jeff Close, Hon Co-ordinator  
[closeandmoller@gmail.com](mailto:closeandmoller@gmail.com)

### 2021 INVITATION

You are cordially invited to attend the  
celebrations for the  
**50- Bronze Swagman Award For Bush Verse**

to be held in Winton on  
Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
at Windemere Station, just out of town.

You may be interested in also taking in:

- Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – children's Bush Poetry Performance Festival at Winton Shire Hall. Free entry
- Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – proposed North Gregory Race Club meeting
- Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021 – 50<sup>th</sup> Bronze Swagman Event which will also be our Welcome to the Outback Festival
- Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September to Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September – Winton's Outback Festival.

Plan early to be part of the fun and celebrations.

Contact: Jeff Close, Hon Bronze Swagman  
co-ordinator at [closeandmoller@gmail.com](mailto:closeandmoller@gmail.com)

Website: [bronzeswagman.info](http://bronzeswagman.info)

# Next Magazine Deadline is November 27th

## ABPA Committee Members 2020

### Executive:

President	-- Tim Sheed	president@abpa.org.au
Vice-President	-- Ray Essery	essery56m@bigpond.com
Secretary	-- Meg Gordon	meggordon4@bigpond.com
Treasurer	-- Christine Middleton	treasurer@abpa.org.au

### Members on Committee:

Manfred Vijars		manfred@rocketfrog.com.au
Tom McLveen		thepoetofoz@gmail.com

### Non Committee Positions

Webmaster	Gregory North	web@abpa.org.au
Magazine Editor	Neil McArthur	editor@abpa.org.au
Facebook Editor	Jan Lewis	janlewis1@hotmail.com

# Editorial

Send Submissions to [editor@abpa.org.au](mailto:editor@abpa.org.au)



Well, time for another magazine from the confinement of these walls in Victoria. We slowly seem to be getting somewhere now, but with the cancellation of so many Events, it has been a hard time for the Spoken Word Community. Some States are faring better than others, but now with the announcement of the 2021 Tamworth Country Music Festival being cancelled, it leaves a big hole in the Bush Poetry Calander,.

Calls are still to be made on other upcoming Festivals and hopefully we get to grace the stage again in the not too distant future. Hopefully many will come out of these strange times with some great and funny stories to tell, although at present there is little being submitted to the Magazine to share with others, but even so, I hope I have put together an entertaining and interesting Magazine this issue.

Please keep an eye out on our website [www.abpa.org.au](http://www.abpa.org.au) for all the latest news on upcoming Events and Competitions and the appropriate changes. We will try to keep everybody up to date there between Magazines.

Our hearts go out to everyone effected by these difficult times  
Neil McArthur - Editor

## **For Magazine Submissions can you all please note.**

Articles, Poems, Stories, etc. need to be submitted in either Word (.doc or .docx) format or PDF (.pdf) format. Old Publisher files and .odt and .windat files can not be used due to being outdated.

For Photos, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE send Pics that are of a high quality and most importantly IN FOCUS! A lot of readers tell me 'That photo was a bit blurry!'. But when receiving one photo from an event which has not been captured well, it does not matter what programs, filters etc. you put it through, it cannot miraculously be put in focus.

I appreciate all efforts of those members submitting to the magazine, so they are just a couple of important hints to help me publish your articles and poems with the respect that they deserve.

### ABPA Magazine Advertising Rates

ABN 17 145 367 949 ARBN: 104 032 126

### Black and White Ads

Full page \$95  
Half Page \$55  
Quarter Page or less \$35

### Full Colour Ads (Space limited)

Full Page \$240  
Half Page \$140  
Quarter Page not available

### Poets Calendar and Regular Events free (one or two lines only)

To help offset costs, articles regarding a festival or event would be appreciated if accompanied by a paid Ad. Send all details in plain text, Word or PDF Format to [editor@abpa.org.au](mailto:editor@abpa.org.au)

All payments to be made within 14 days to

#### **The Treasurer - Christine Middleton**

P.O. Box 357 Portarlington  
Victoria 3223

[treasurer@abpa.org.au](mailto:treasurer@abpa.org.au)

or via Direct Debit to ABPA Account

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Please put your name/club/invoice as reference so Treasurer can identify who the deposit is from.

# President's Report

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

In these days of the modern plague we must be extraordinarily adaptable as events are cancelled, postponed or deferred.

So it is with Tamworth, our traditional bush poets national gathering.

The Dusty Swag National Bush Poetry written competition will be going ahead and to date a pleasing number of entries have been received. It is particularly pleasing that we are getting quite a few junior entrants. Check out the ABPA website for conditions and entry forms and start telling your stories. The Banjo Paterson Festival has received adequate funding from three local shires to conduct a professional event which is very pleasing.

The ABPA committee decided at our last meeting that there would only be a performance competition if all states were able to attend. At this stage Orange will be holding the event but we don't know the precise form it will take.



The committee is at the point of finalising the revised draft Constitution and the draft is currently on the website. I encourage members to read carefully and forward comments and suggestions for committee consideration. It is planned to ratify the document at the Annual General Meeting in January.

A further matter that the Treasurer is pursuing is our members insurance with the intent that the ABPA be able to act as auspicing body for local poetry events rather than having to pay individual event premiums.

That is enough of business.

As a tribute to a life of tirelessly promoting Australian Bush Poetry, the ABPA committee unanimously voted that a life membership be granted to Jan Lewis. Jan is the long time President of the Victorian Bush Poets Association and organizer of the bush poetry at the Man From Snowy River Festival at Corryong. Jan is also the Victorian Representative on the National ABPA Committee

I encourage members to write their stories, yarns and poems down for future generations. It is the stories that are remembered and carry the history on.

As soon as travel restrictions were lifted for regional Victoria we travelled to Mansfield and met with Val Kirley, bush poet and long time friend.

Val has lived all her life in the region and is a horsewoman and storyteller. Val is a stalwart of the Mansfield Bush Poets group that meet the second Tuesday of each month and do a regular weekly spot on the local Community radio station.

It is salt of the earth people like Val and Jan who keep the stories alive.

Best Regards until we meet again,  
Tim Sheed  
President ABPA

**Visit Our Website**

***www.abpa.org.au***



### **STOP PRESS:**

Murrurundi (NSW) King of the Ranges Stockman's Challenge and Bush Poetry Competition, originally scheduled for February 2021 has been postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Mark your calendars for the weekend of 25th September, 2021, keep your fingers crossed and watch for details in the next issue.

kingoftheranges.com.au

Carol Heuchan  
Carrobity

# Lawson's Legacy

© Shelley Hansen

## Winner – 2020 Bronze Spur Written Bush Poetry Competition – Camooweal Queensland

*Author's note: In 1900 Henry Lawson took his wife and children to England, in search of employment and recognition in London literary circles. The trip was a creative and financial disaster and the family returned to Australia in 1902.*

You're shaking with a shiver as a mist lifts off a river  
reflecting back the city lights at night.  
Your mind is fixed on work  
but your heart is back o' Bourke  
and longs to tell the stories of the plight  
of farmers and their cattle, and the dusty, weary battle  
through years of drought that end with too much rain.  
The house where you were born  
rises sharply to adorn  
sweet memories that take you back again.

You've come here on a mission to fulfill your grand ambition  
to infiltrate the Mother Country's voice,  
and stake your claim to fame –  
or return in abject shame  
to face the consequences of your choice.  
Whatever were you thinking? Were you prompted by the drinking  
to say the stamp of Londoners might lend  
more credence to your craft?  
Come on, Henry – don't be daft!  
Think back on all the poetry you've penned.

Beyond the city's glowing, you can hear the cattle lowing  
by Reedy River, shaded from the sun,  
as Andy on his horse  
navigates the water course,  
preserving life along the Western run.  
The drover's wife is grieving for a husband who is leaving  
to guide the herd to where the grass is sweet.  
She knows she'll wait and yearn,  
counting tears till his return  
as seasons stumble by on leaden feet.

There's Smithy and the Spieler – out to swindle some old sheila,  
as faces in the street are blurred from view.  
The roaring days of old  
bring to mind the shouts of Gold!  
as lights of Cobb & Co come riding through.  
You can't forget the mountains, or the misty, mossy fountains  
that punctuate the Great Dividing Range –  
or death-sky barren plains  
where the bleached and white remains  
of stock are proof that some things never change.



Your outback trekking tired you, but these things are what inspired you!  
Your voice does not belong on England's shore.  
The endless numbing chill  
makes you weak, and old – and ill,  
and rattles your foundations to the core.  
Your wife and children suffer as you strive to build a buffer  
to manufacture quiet time and space  
to meditate – to write –  
but you're locked within your plight  
as hunger, want and need claim pride of place.

The dullness of your hearing deadens footsteps disappearing –  
you walk the gaslit street with vacant stare.  
The foggy silence haunts  
and the empty pavement taunts,  
but you are seeing something else, somewhere.  
Each window pane reflection is a frame of recollection,  
the scent of nutmeg wafts from custard pies.  
Your mother's work-worn hands –  
proof that someone understands  
the loneliness that you cannot disguise.

The qualities that make you are the same as those that break you,  
but Henry, you must turn the rudder back  
to where your heart belongs –  
where they sing the sweetest songs –  
to where the billy boils along the track.  
Return and tell your story where the colours shout their glory,  
where southern stars illuminate the skies.  
Your legacy will last  
with endurance unsurpassed –  
for each of us is mirrored in your eyes.

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The results of the 2020 'Bronze Spur Award' written poetry competition at The Drovers Camp, Camooweal sent by Ellen Finlay co-ordinator:  
1st and Winner of the Bronze Spur Lawson's Legacy by Shelley Hansen Qld.  
2nd Aussie Mateship by Shelley Hansen Qld.  
3rd Fortunes of War by Terry Piggott WA  
H.C. Following Waltzing Matilda by Helen Harvey NSW

The competition was co-judged by Gary Fogarty and Brenda Joy. Thank you Ellen and to all at the Drovers for running this written competition despite the cancellation of this year's Festival. The Bronze Spur and the Drovers Camp Festival will be on again in August 2021.

# Logan Bush Poets

From Friday Night 11th till Sunday the 13th of September.

Logan Queensland swelled somewhat with an influx of bush poets who had come along to Logan's annual bush poetry event the Muddy River.(that's our Logan)

It started with Melissa McMahon MP attending our sausage sizzle and Huey looking after us well and truly. We were supposed to have heavy rain but thankfully it stayed away and the wind of the early afternoon dropped for the barbeque.

About 30 participants indulged some were hungry after the two hour workshop with Jan Facey. (A past Australian champion who was to be one of the judges over the weekend the other judge was Ron Leikefett also a past Australian Champion. They both did a brilliant job with no anomalies or large differences in scores.)

We then retired for the Meet and Greet in Heck Cottage, the beautiful colonial house that will take pride of place in the village when the renovations are all complete.

The evening was full of songs and poetry. A special guest was young Amy Ryan who won the "Welcome back to Tamworth" song writing award 2020 which she sang for us! (She is only eleven)

We also were impressed with some digidigereroo playing from a new member Paul Sones.

We had fun with the One Minute won by Andrew Ryan.

The evening finished off with a lovely supper provided with the compliments of the Logan poets.

Saturday saw us with a day of poetry at the Beenleigh showgrounds hall. The program had a Novice a Classical, a Modern and then an Original. We finished up at about 2.45.pm

Sunday morning we were back to the Historical Village in the cinema and well entertained by poems jokes and yarns..A great weekend despite the borders being closed.

Results.

Overall Grand Champion and winner of the Logan's Legacy award: Andrew Pulsford. Andrew won the Modern and placed second in the Classical and the Original.

The Logan's Legend award Highest points in the Logan group went to Janine Keating who won the Classical and placed second in the Modern. Janine also received the Perpetual trophy given every year to the top Logan Legend.

Bob Kettle won the Original and placed third in the Modern.

Paddy OBrien placed third in the Modern and Original

Mike Gilmore from North Pine got a third in the Novice and the Classical.

Don Macqueen won the Logan's Luck . (This award goes to the highest point scorer in the Logan group who has not won an Open. (It's like an

Intermediate award)

The Novice was won by Ruth Savage then Andrew Ryan, followed by Mike Gilmour and Sue Smith.

Our favourite Logan Lag was won by Paddy OBrien.

Our written was won by Brenda Joy.

With HC's Going to Brenda? Shelley Hansen and Peter O'Shaughnessy

The Commended went to Peter (Peter received two) and Robyn Sykes.

A great weekend and it couldn't have been achieved without our supporters Narelle ,Anne and Harold for the barbeque and the cleanup after the supper.

Laurie Pulsford, Julie Kettle, Steve Smith and our final collator Ian Buddle. They all took a turn at scoring.

Well done everyone and the virus didn't beat us!

Gerry King (Coordinator of Logan Performance Bush Poets )



# FUMBLES

© Marco Gliori

Winner 2020 Winton Bronze Swagman Award

He rose up from the bushes, resurrected each new day,  
I guess it was my job to move him gently on his way,  
old mates, we re-connected in a broken sorry scene,  
he was Fumbles, I was Andrew, and this was our routine.

Each morning in the Council Shed, I served him cups of tea,  
my fellow workers listened as we seized each memory,  
cavorting like true locals, Fumbles sober, was on fire,  
his long-discarded sporting yarns were something to admire.

He'd earned his clumsy nickname in the Spring of ninety-one.  
We both ran in the backline with the final surely won,  
a mighty bomb soon beckoned, we collided in the sky,  
the ball spilled out, their winger swooped and scored the winning try.

Lamenting in the dressing sheds, regret rose with the steam,  
till one of us stood tall, apologizing to the team.  
My silence, it was shameful, he was brave to bear the stain,  
next day his name was Fumbles, and he never played again.

"He called the ball!" I testified while drowning our defeat,  
but Fumbles was an easy mark, grew up on struggle street,  
he laughed away the hecklers, said his handle was deserved,  
and though I tried to sell his case, each time I did, he swerved.

Next year we went one better, but young Fumbles didn't play,  
he was shearing, some bloke reckoned, out Eromanga way.  
and drinking like a shearer too, and fightin' down the pub,  
then with his goon, he'd fade away, tormented, in the scrub.

There, haunted by his demons, horrors nightly came to call,  
a good bloke, such potential, did his parents drop the ball?  
I pondered this last Spring, when after decades on the booze,  
he limped into our Council Park, all bones, and busted shoes.

I offered him a bath, a feed, and as I did, he wept,  
when he refused my house, I told the Salvos where he slept.  
Each morning we pursued our past, a futile bloody chase,  
but Fumbles never once brought up the depths of my disgrace.

Well, now I write this ode to him, for Death has been to call,  
it cannot soothe my conscience, but I pledge to tell it all.  
Swallowed up by flames he was, now history will decree,  
his 'blaze of glory' exit, paints him worthier than me.

He was at the Pub last Sunday, from above, there came a boom!  
The residents were fleeing, but one Mum, trapped in her room,  
was screaming from the window, Fumbles heard it on the breeze,  
her baby outstretched in her arms, "Quick! Someone! Help us please!"

Around the corner Fumbles stumbled, pleading from below,  
"I hear ya' love, I hear ya' love! I've got him love, let go!"  
She closed her eyes as flames rose up behind for one more bid,  
then dropped her bundle through the smoke...and Fumbles caught the kid.



He passed the baby over, then took off to help inside,  
as minutes passed, the pub went up, but only one soul died.  
They found him lying in the hall outside that Mother's door,  
she'd jumped herself, escaped, was safe, but Fumbles was no more.

A nickname so fortuitous that sometimes I do think,  
our paths are chiseled out for us before we even blink.  
His last breath was a beauty, drawing courage from the air,  
a dropped ball in a footy match will never quite compare.

Today I told his story there beside his council grave,  
now time alone will designate how folklore should behave.  
I suspect it will be kind to him, with my life slowing down,  
for those I meet know Fumbles had the safest hands in town.

# News From Our US Friend Dick Warrick

*Thanks to John Best*

Dick Warwick The Barnyard Yarnbard, from Washington State. Dick is a Cowboy poet who visits us regularly and is caught up in the Wildfires up through California Oregon and on into Washington State. So far so good, lost power which means no water so is carting for 20 horses and "sundry critturs". Worn out and worried but otherwise in good spirits. I am in touch with him but I believe an email or two from other poets he has helped over there or stayed with here would cheer him up immensely. he now tells me the Virus has finally arrived in his little neck of the woods. Dick's email is [dwarwick@mindspring.com](mailto:dwarwick@mindspring.com) Dick's convinced we live in the lucky country and I won't argue with him there. Reach out if you can he's been a real good friend to many in the poetry world



*Yup, John, it's the s\*its lately. We're still without power. And now the smoke has moved in from Oregon and California and it is so thick we can't see things less than a mile away. And they say it's going to get much worse by evening and last at least 2 days. This is the worst I've seen.*

*Without power we have no water. Hauling it from town for the 20+ horses and all the rest of the critters, including us. Trying to keep the veggie garden alive also.*

*My son and grandson had just closed (signed final papers) on a property over near Malden. Luckily, they were able to save the house, just. But lost a big shop/shed and the combine harvester parked within. And other outbuildings. A big wheel tractor came with the place and the tires burnt off the plow parked right next to it but the tractor escaped. Fires are indeed capricious, as you in Australia know well.*

*Our county (Whitman) is listed as a COVID hotspot at present. And Miles' school set to start on Monday with in-person classes! Sheesh. Yup, we'll sure remember 2020, if we survive it. No guarantees there either.*

*I see this email is pretty much doom and gloom. Sorry, mate, but I'm going to send it anyway.*

*I keep dreaming about poetry gatherings. Dunno if I'll ever make another one. Oops! gloom and doom again.*

*Maybe things will ease up soon..... best thought to you and Glennie & all you Lucky Country-ites.*

Dick

Dick Warwick of Oakesdale, known in venues both in the United States and Australia for his cowboy poetry and his marriage of cowboy poetry and Australian Bush poetry.

Warwick grew up on the family farm near Oakesdale and after earning a degree in English from Stanford University, doing a little graduate work and trying out a few jobs, decided the place for him was farming.

He and a friend decided in 1981 to apply for a job with a harvest contractor in western Australia as combine drivers. They were hired and spent four months on contract, enough time to fall in love with all things Australian and to draw Warwick back to Australia a total of six times.

While minding the farm, Warwick and three other musicians in 1982 formed the Urban Coyote Bush Band and performed off and on for six to eight years. Warwick had taught himself a variety of stringed instruments and the harmonica. The band gets back together occasionally and recently performed at Dahmen Barn in Uniontown.

Warwick had heard Australian bush poetry during visits down under, but had never heard of a genre called cowboy poetry in America until 1989 when he went to Elko, Nev., to take part in the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. He said he had written a few poems that would work as cowboy poetry and, during an open mic session, read them. The next year he found himself on the program.

Warwick points out that all "working man" jobs spurred poetry. There is Logger Poetry and Fisher Poetry and, in Australia, Shearer Poetry. For years the lone entertainment for workers in many crafts and jobs was "themselves" and the poetry of meter and rhyme fed into a wealth of expression. He noted the term "cowboy poetry" is actually too narrow.

Warwick has been a featured poet at the Colorado Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Ozark Folk Center and many other venues, events and festivals. For three years he was an invited participant in several Australian folk and poetry festivals. In March of 2006 he returned to Western Australia as a cultural ambassador sponsored by the US consulate in Perth. He performed in schools, festivals and other events.

For more than 10 years, Warwick has hosted Australian poets and musicians, introducing audiences in the Pacific Northwest to bush poetry and the tradition that parallels that of our own cowboy poetry.

In January, Warwick for the fifth time will be a featured performer at the national gathering in Elko. His poetry has been published in several editions, including this year in the annual Australian anthology, The Bronze Swagman Book of Verse. He has produced a number of CDs including "From the Range to the Strange" and a book, "Out West to Outback and Beyond."



# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WA

WA State Championships are about to get under way in Toodyay. It will be a totally local event with WA judges, Terry Bennetts (Perth) Robyn Bowcock (Derby) and Terry Piggott (Perth). Starting on Friday 30th Oct and finishing Sunday 1st November.

## W.A. Bush Poets



TOODYAY .



TERRY BENNETTS

Terry will conduct a writing workshop. **Bush Poetry to Bush Ballads** and will also be entertaining us at the Variety Concert and Dance on Saturday evening.

WA Poets are continuing to practise via zoom and over the winter months a number have travelled to the warmer parts of the state and have been conducting poetry evenings in caravan parks. These have been well received and we appreciate being able to perform to a live audience again.

It hasn't all been about poetry, we have managed to get some fishing and swimming in as well. Sunset drinks on Cable Beach has also been enjoyed. As is usual at this time of the year, the wildflowers were at their best.



(above) Pearl lugger Cable Beach  
(right) Dave Morrell (Broome poet) and Bill Gordon also enjoying the sunset



(right) Sturt's Desert Pea

(below) Potato Flower



(left) Opening night of the Shingu Matsui Festival Town Beach Broome



Christine Boulton and Meg Gordon jamming



Some catches were one meal size some were more!



Poets on the Ashburton River (Onslow WA)  
(l-r) Bill Gordon , Jem Shorland ,Christine Boulton, Maxine Richter.



More winning poems from the 2019 *Wombat Award for Poetry*, successfully run for children by *The Henry Lawson Literary and Memorial Society*, Melbourne.

# Our Poetry Kids

with Brenda Joy

Hi! My name is Ruth Foote and I am 14 years old. I live in Sydney with my family; I have a brother and two sisters. We have all been home-schooled. I also have a very cute dog named Stella. I love horse-riding, acting and of course writing!



My name is Joshua. I am 14 years old and I live in Cessnock NSW. I like breeding birds as a hobby and my sport is Rock Climbing and in my free time I like to read and mountain bike. I am home schooled and my favourite subject is Art.



## Bushfires

by Ruth Foote

Third Place – Wombat Award 2019

Like some evil red mist they creep,  
Underneath the willows that weep,  
Faster than a galloping horse,  
Over and across the grass so coarse.

The sky is dark red with smoke,  
So thick is the air, it makes you choke,  
The wind whips the dusty trees,  
The tattered bushes fall down on their knees.  
Utter rage and anger unleashed,  
Peace and calm are long deceased.

In the blink of an eye, the fire is gone,  
The land looks cold, tired and worn.  
The country is dead,  
All life has fled,  
No living thing is to be seen,  
The trees look black and lean.

But soon new life appears,  
The bright yellow sun calms all fears,  
The trees have new life,  
The leaves ease all strife,  
Everything is lush and green,  
The country eases into normal routine.  
The animals wake in the morning,  
and sleep at night,  
Everything seems proper and right.

© 2019 Ruth Foote (at age 13)

## But the People Carry on

by Joshua Blunt

Highly Commended – Wombat Award 2019

In the dark and dreary  
The spark set light.  
Hear the soul shattering boom.  
The execution of shaft-man.

The teary days that followed,  
The darkness swamped the air,  
Crying for the ones they loved  
The bells all sounding dull.

But the people carry on  
Charging through their despair.  
With loneliness gripping the air  
They love, they rebuild, they repair.

© 2019 Joshua Blunt (at age 13)

## The Emu – A Haiku

by Felix Solomon

Highly Commended – Wombat Award 2019

The emu wakes up.  
Look how many bugs there are!  
He puts his claw out.

© 2019 Felix Solomon (at age 7)

All poems previously published in *The Lawsonian*, the official newsletter of *The Henry Lawson Literary and Memorial Society*, November 2019 issue.

# HEART OF AUSTRALIA

© 2020 Brenda Joy

Winner 2020 Boree Log Award for Bush Verse, Eastwood/Hills FAW.

From the islands, land bridges and straits to my north,  
first born race to inhabit my lands,  
with due reverence, awed, in their tribes they came forth  
to my coasts and my vast desert sands.  
When I taught them my secrets to help them survive,  
their soft tread had no adverse effect.  
As their 'mother' my mountains and rocks came alive  
and they treated my gifts with respect.

.....

Across oceans of conquest more came to my shores  
from a country of poverty's reign.  
British subjects convicted by harsh, penal laws,  
much afflicted by torture and pain.  
But their spirit was strong and they found in my world  
their release from the class system's wheel.  
As the promise of emancipation unfurled  
they accepted my challenge with zeal.

Then they traversed terrain – rugged slopes, mountain tops –  
till they gained the rewards of their toil.  
With free settlers arrived, they spread outwards with crops  
and they learned to produce from my soil.  
Then when gold was discovered more came here to take  
but as 'diggers' they bonded through need.  
Their Eureka rebellion protest would make  
for reforms of colonial creed.

Brave explorers would forge their intrepid attacks  
and the telegraph followed their quest,  
then a wave of adventurers journeyed their tracks  
pioneering my north and my west.  
So, the bards and the balladeers told how they strove  
with the dust and the heat and the flies,  
of the sheep that they sheared and the cattle they drove –  
of endeavours and tough enterprise.

Till their disparate tribes federated, became  
a new nation enacting as one,  
as united, 'Australians' with my given name –  
the identity ties had begun.  
They were forged from my soil but now Empire would call,  
for the nations of Europe were torn,  
and they gave of their courage and gave of their all –  
so, the spirit of Anzac was born.

Through the post-war Depression, beyond all compare  
they endured effects felt global wide,  
but they took consolation in heroes of air  
and of sport, with developing pride.  
When the earth was embroiled in a second world war  
my courageous were injured or slain –  
legendary encounters much nearer my shore  
where their valour was proved once again.



I was theirs to protect, so more people were sought  
to be drawn by new migration schemes  
and from war-torn regimes they would come and they brought  
skills and labour expanding their dreams.  
In a land that was free from oppression and race  
and as policies opened the way,  
they established a rich, multicultural base  
symbolising Australia today.

.....

Aborigine, convict, a seeker, a sage  
– whether born here or come from afar –  
representing the boldest and best of their age –  
that's what brought them to where you now are.  
Persecuted, reviled – victim, slave, refugee –  
what catastrophe caused them to come?  
But they found a new life, unencumbered and free  
with the fortitude not to succumb.

.....

Now it's you who can counteract foreign demands  
to ensure you stay true to your creed  
and it's you who have suffered who best understands  
and can help support others in need.  
Please keep out from my shores all the hatred and strife  
generated when sides disagree.  
Be united in cause. Save your blessed way of life.  
Let your tolerance keep my land free.

It is you who must strive to uphold what I give,  
who must weather my violent extremes,  
so my children to come can continue to live  
in the beauty and peace of their dreams.  
It is you who are privileged to live as a part  
of a land that's both fragile and strong  
where all those gone before still live on in my heart  
for they gave so that you could belong.

# Wonderful Winton

by Gregory North

I must be the luckiest poet in Australia!

With festivals and engagements cancelled due to COVID-19, I was stuck at home with no work. When Queensland opened its border to New South Wales in mid-July, I jumped at the chance to travel to Winton. Since then, I have been performing daily at the Matilda Country Tourist Park (7 pm) and the North Gregory Hotel (4:30 pm. And yes, it never gets old – Gregory North at the North Gregory Hotel!).

The number of visitors has been quite constant. Only those from the southern states have decreased over the period but Queenslanders have more than made up for them. Those who would normally be overseas have come to the outback to discover their own back yards. Reactions to my shows have been very encouraging and I am proud to be keeping bush poetry alive in Winton.

It is a privilege to be following in the footsteps of poets who have performed at the Matilda Country Tourist Park over about the last 30 years. I spruced up my performance space, Banjo's Barn, with a rogues' gallery of those who have gone before: Nell Perkins, Gloria Hitson, Milton Taylor, Long John Best and Mel and Susie.



It was wonderful to have a visit from Carmel Wooding and her family during September. Carmel was gracious enough to perform some poems to the appreciative audience over the two nights she was here. On Sunday the 30th August, I was delighted to launch my new book at the Waltzing Matilda Centre. The Mayor started proceedings and about 35 locals and visitors supported the successful event. Poet, friend and proof-reader, Heather Knight, also travelled up for the event. This is my fifth year of performing in Winton and over that time I have developed a keen interest in Waltzing Matilda and the life of "Banjo" Paterson. Benjamin Lindner's book *Waltzing Matilda*, launched last year, is a great read and corrected a lot of the myths surrounding the song. However, one of the mysteries remaining is exactly how and when Banjo arrived in Winton. I thought old newspapers might hold some clues and made an extensive search. In the process, I developed a great insight into Winton around the time of Banjo's visit and thought it was worth sharing. That's how my book, *Winton in the year of Waltzing Matilda* came about.



At the time, the coming of the railway, the success of the artesian bore and the visit by the Premier were all big news stories. There are many fascinating insights into how people coped with droughts, floods and other difficulties of outback life as well as the pleasures and amusements they enjoyed.

Another highlight of my stay in the Winton district was a visit to Combo Waterhole and photographer extraordinaire, John Elliott, snapped this memory.

The Combo Waterhole may have been visited by Banjo during his visit and could have been an inspiration for what has become our unofficial national anthem. The road to the waterhole has recently been sealed too!



Every day in Winton I have been counting my blessings. I am so fortunate to be able to perform in these difficult COVID-19 times and I relish the opportunity.

I wish health and happiness to all and look forward to the next phase in sharing our beloved bush poetry. As Frank Daniel used to say, "Keep writin' and recitin'!"

# Winton

# New Book

*“Come for a walk that Banjo walked  
in Winton in 1895.”*

Jeff Close OAM, Chair, Waltzing Matilda Centre Ltd.

What did the newspapers have to say when solicitor and poet Andrew Barton “Banjo” Paterson visited Winton 125 years ago? During his visit, he and Christina Macpherson created what became Australia’s best-known song – Waltzing Matilda. Through contemporary newspaper reports, the book paints a picture of the Winton that “Banjo” visited in 1895–6.

**Winton in the year of *Waltzing Matilda***  
A5-size, 360 pages \$35 posted.

Combine with ***Winton’s Wisp of Banjo Paterson***  
double CD \$50 posted.

Also available

***Rhyming Verse of Denis Kevans***  
hard-cover book, 600 poems \$60 posted.

**[www.gregorynorth.com.au](http://www.gregorynorth.com.au)**

5 Dryandra Place LINDEN NSW 2778.

Phone: 0425 210 083

# Waltzing Matilda

1895–6

**Gregory North**

## MILTON SHOW SOCIETY BUSH POETRY

8AM POETS BREAKFAST WITH WALK UPS WITH A DIFFERENCE. PRIZE'S

\$100 1ST \$60 2ND \$40 3RD ENTRANTS MAY RECITE OR SING A SONG UNACCOMPANIED (WITHOUT MUSIC)

OPEN PERFORMANCE COMPETITION TO START AT 11AM

TO BE HELD AT THE MILTON SHOW

IN THE JNA THOMPSON PAVILION

SAT 6TH MARCH 2021

OPEN COMP CARRIES A TOTAL OF  
\$1500 PRIZE MONEY

1ST \$600 2ND \$350 3RD \$250  
PLUS 3 HIGHLY COMENDED AT \$100 EA



milton show  
society

MAXIMUM OF 15 PERFORMERS ACCEPTED ON FIRST IN FIRST SERVED BASIS

Entries postmarked no later than 5th FEBRUARY 2021 Entry fee \$15

Entries to Poetry Coordinator John Davis 37 George Avenue Kings Point NSW  
2539

POEM CAN BE SERIOUS OR LIGHT HEARTED AND CLASSICAL, CONTEMPORARY OR ORIGINAL  
COMPLIMENTARY TEA & COFFEE WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE VENUE.

DOWNLOAD ENTRY FORMS FROM ABPA WEBSITE OR [www.showdayonline.com](http://www.showdayonline.com) and follow the prompts

OR Contact John Davis 37 George Avenue Kings Point NSW 2539

Ph 02 44552013 email [jda76436@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jda76436@bigpond.net.au)

# Australia's Beating Heart

*Produced by Australian Geographic*  
**Edited by Melanie Hall and Susan Carcary**  
*Traditional Bush Poetry (1860-1930)*  
**OUT NOW**

Available at all good bookshops and online at [australiangeographic.com.au](http://australiangeographic.com.au)

In conjunction with Australian Geographic, Melanie Hall and Susan Carcary have edited a new anthology of Australian Bush Poetry titled 'Australia's Beating Heart'. Beautifully illustrated with AG photographs, this coffee table book presents a selection of all your favorite bush poems as well as a few surprises.

The poems span roughly 1860 to 1930. It includes all the best known poets: Paterson, Lawson, CJ Dennis, Dorothea Mackellar, Mary Gilmore as well as lesser known poets like Alice Geurin Christ, Mollie McNutt, Mabel Forrest and Hal Percy.

Australian Geographic wanted the book divided into 5 sections of poems: war; love; humour; the bush and city life. After much to-ing and fro-ing and many suggestions, they settled on category titles that reflect the rhythm of the poetry, hence the war section is titled 'Beat of the Drum'; love is titled 'My Heart Skipped a Beat'; City life is titled 'The Beat of the Feet'; poems about the bush are called 'Off the Beaten Track' and humor is 'That Beats 'Em All'. This ties in to the name of the book: Australia's Beating Heart'. Their decision to include categories in turn affected the selection of poems for the anthology.

AG also ran in to some copyright issues so favorites like Ted Harrington, Tom Quilty and several other poets could not be included in the anthology

Mel and Susie edited the selection. They had to be mindful to include all the classics as well as poems that reflect our unique flora and fauna; classic Aussie characters like bushrangers; poems that showcase our unique lingo and humour; poems that are terrific to recite to an audience; poems that reflect the diversity of work published in The Bulletin as well as lesser known and more obscure works. The list of possibilities was endless and the selection process took months.

Australian Geographic commissioned art work specially for the cover of this anthology - a lino cut of Australian wild flowers by Gillian Nix.

Mel and Susie hope this book will appeal to everyone - grandparents who want the grandies to hear and read some bush poetry, travelers who want to remember the scent of gum leaves and families who want some genuine Australiana in their home

The anthology is available in most good bookshops; online at [australiangeographic.com.au](http://australiangeographic.com.au) and of course from Mel and Susie in Lightning Ridge.



# Great Aussie Reads

*With Jack Drake*



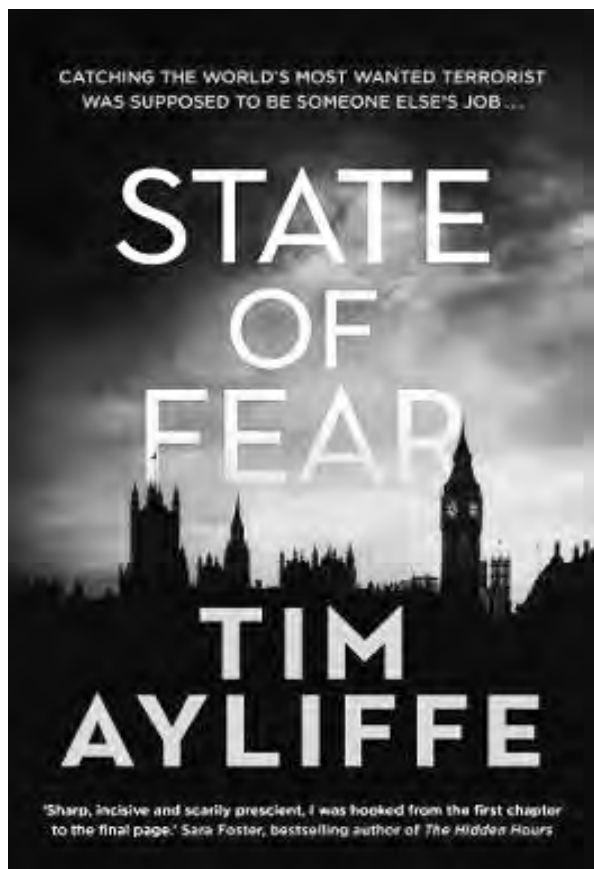
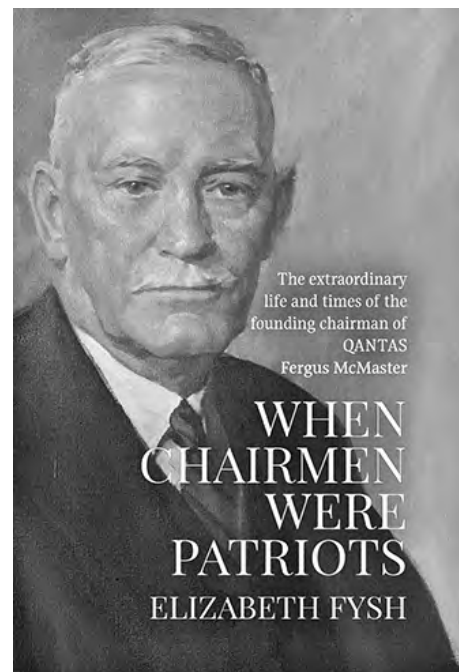
Australian history is filled with inspiring stories and the birth and development of QANTAS is up there with the best. The biography of Sir Fergus McMaster, *When Chairmen were Patriots, the Extraordinary Life and Times of the Founding Chairman of QANTAS*, by Elizabeth Fysh, (Boolarong Press 2020) is an extremely worthwhile read.

QANTAS (Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service) was the brainchild of three men – Fergus McMaster a prominent Western Queensland grazier and two World War I pilots, Paul McGinness and Hudson Fysh.

Elizabeth Fysh has achieved what many writer of history seem unable to do. She has penned an entertaining read. McMaster's story rocks along from the family's early Scottish history, through goldmining ventures to large pastoral holdings in Western Queensland, and onto some visionary dreams to conquer the tyranny of distance with aircraft.

The McMaster story covers the fledgling airline's struggle to survive the great depression and its contribution to the World War II efforts, to QANTAS' eventual nationalisation in the 1940s.

*When Chairmen were Patriots* is a great read written by a relative of one of the QANTAS founders. Fysh had access to family photos and records and has made a terrific job of putting this history down in a very readable format.



It has been quite a while since I came across a new Australian novelist who grabbed my attention. From the first page *State of Fear* by Tim Ayliffe (Simon and Schuster, 2019) had me enthralled.

Ayliffe has constructed a fast paced, edgy thriller based on international terrorism that fairly gallops across the pages.

The hero, John Baily, is a divorced journalist with a grown up daughter. Through his relationship with a senior police officer, he is drawn into a web of intrigue with more twists and turns than some of the roads Gary Fogarty and I drove in Tasmania recently.

I will not say another word about the plot of *State of Fear* but suffice to say I will be seeking out Tim Ayliffe's first novel after reading his second effort.

If you like a story that holds you on a knife edge right up to the last page, give *State of Fear* a go.

More great Aussie reads at [www.outbackbooks.info](http://www.outbackbooks.info)

# Val Kirley – by Christine Middleton

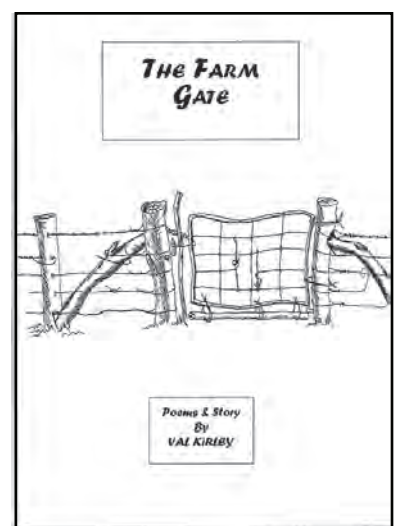
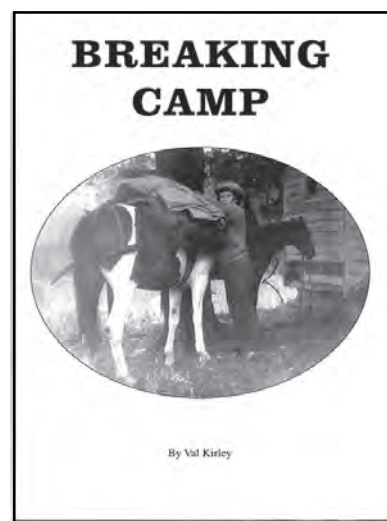
Val Kirley is a bush poet from Mansfield and a member of the Mansfield Bush Poets Group who meet on the 2nd Tuesday at the Mansfield Library. Each member of the group take turns every Sunday at 1pm to present original and traditional poetry at the local Community Radio Station (Mansfield Radio 99.7).

Val started writing poetry over forty years ago. "If something has happened I get a mad burst to write," she says. "I wrote one last year – it's praying for rain. I was at the farm and I tripped and I kicked up a bit of dust and I talked to the dog. It pays to have a dog in the distance. I said 'strewth' it's dry. That was the first line."

Her own life growing up in the region especially around Tolmie – a one pub town 10 minutes up the road from Mansfield, is her inspiration. Val grew up around Mansfield at Dueran and Preston stations and did her school work from there. She later attended the now historic Alzburg Convent in Mansfield and remembers the time fondly although she says "the nuns had their version of heaven. My version was white rail fences, a big roan horse and never having to open the gate."

In 2009, Val won the Mountain Cattlemen's Bush Poetry competition, reciting 13 verses to a crowd of country folk keen to embrace a storytelling tradition made famous by Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. Val's poem was about a flashy chestnut horse called The Maharajah that was stolen in the night. As she finished the last line, the audience clapped and cheered and local history was made. Her poetry is not only entertaining but a historical record of the struggles and triumphs of life on the land. "The Maharajah" can be found in Val's book of original poetry "Breaking Camp". "Breaking camp is when you're packing up and getting back on the horse after running cattle," she explains and the cover carries a photograph of Val as a teenager after packing her horse. Val has also produced two other books of original poetry "The Farm Gate" and "Where the Big Cod Sleeps", the latter of which is in the National Library of Australia.

Val is an active member of the local community, volunteering at the local pony club and raising money to restore pavers at the St Joseph's Catholic Church at Tolmie. She also won the award for the country show's best Anzac Biscuits in December 2016.





# THE MAHARAJAH

© Val Kirley (1983)

*Winner of the Mountain Cattlemen's Bush Poetry competition held at Merrijig in 2009*

Tom Laklen stirred in his sleep,  
Half woken by the cattle dog's bark,  
That tried to warn his master  
Of the intruders in the dark.  
Tom was the station manager  
And as the sun dawned o'er the hill,  
He looked towards the stable yard,  
Everything was silent and still.

The stable boy burst into the room,  
On his face the look of shock,  
There in his shaking hand,  
Was a cut chain and padlock.  
"The Maharajah's missing, Sir."  
The boy's features had turned white,  
"The horse was sleeping peacefully,  
I checked him through the night."

The Maharajah was the pride  
Of Major Lewis's racing string  
Winner of many contests,  
With speed of a bird on the wing.  
The Major called on Laklen,  
The best tracker in the land,  
To follow on the tracks they left,  
And bring the stallion back in hand.

He cross the Murray River  
Onto the Victorian side,  
Then climbed o'er the foothills,  
Into the Great Divide.  
He made enquiries as he went,  
Of the flashy chestnut horse,  
From the answers he received,  
He knew he was on the course.

He passed through many mining towns,  
And settlements on the way,  
Till he arrived at Jamieson,  
The gold centre of the day.  
He booked into the hotel there,  
And stabled his horses out,  
Never did he let it be known,  
What his business was about.

While quietly seated at the bar,  
On his shoulder, a strong hand fell,  
'Twas the hand of old Bob Wren,  
A miner he knew so well,  
Wren had a mine up the river,  
And his camp on a little flat,  
He remembered seeing some strangers,  
With a handsome chestnut like that.

They'd passed his way one morning,  
The stallion shone like burnished gold,  
He'd escaped and fled to the scrubland,  
Was the story later told.  
For weeks Tom searched the gullies,  
While Wren worked at the mine,  
Sometimes thinking to themselves  
That they were wasting time.

As they rode up a rise one day,  
"Neath a shady lightwood tree,  
Was the missing chestnut stallion,  
Standing strong, defiant and free.  
They spurred their horses after him,  
But were outrun by his pace,  
When they reached the top of the ridge,  
He'd vanished without a trace.

Tom rode the hills for mile and miles,  
But no sign did he see  
He built a big log yard,  
On the clearing by the creek.  
One evening while checking lines  
That were set in the stream for trout,  
Tom got an eerie feeling  
That something strange was about.

He knew it was no person,  
So he sat in the shadows to think,  
Then, to his surprise,  
Twas the stallion coming to drink.  
His hand began to tremble,  
His eyes gleamed at the sight,  
But the horse sensed his presence,  
And disappeared into the night.

Laklen returned 'cross the Murray,  
His search had been in vain,  
He'd lost the goal he was seeking  
The horse with the golden mane.  
Wren retired from digging,  
Sold his lease and his claim,  
To a man called Fred Mitchell,  
That creek still bears his name.

Mitchell sold out his interests,  
To Will Hoskin who cleared more land,  
Built a house and yards,  
Planted orchards and pine trees grand.  
The Hoskins were hard workers,  
Their social airs were a delight,  
Many an evening was spent,  
With dancing til morning light.

Race meetings were held on the flat,  
Owners watched with pride,  
And bet amongst each other,  
The fastest horses on the Divide.  
The Hoskin's run was well renowned  
For the fastest horses on the range,  
And often was the question asked,  
"Is the Rajah's blood in their veins?"

(Taken from a story in Val's Dad's album (author unknown) about the Mitchell's Creek area and the Hoskin family)



# DUSTY SWAG AWARDS 2020

by Christine Middleton

The "Dusty Swag Awards" were established in 2000 by Paul Bannan of Yea, a highly respected poet and presenter of bush poems and yarns. The name of the awards comes from a poem by Paul titled "The Dusty Swag". Paul has carried a swag and says it was more comfortable than a suitcase, better than a pack and best for camping when on the track.

My father Rex Tate, whom many of you over the years would have met and got to know at the MFSR Festival, Benalla Bush Muster, "When Bush Comes to Town Festival", Yea Carnivale and other local events, has been the driving force behind "The Dusty Swag Awards" for the past 20 years. Every year, Tim and I would drive to the Yarck Hotel and along with Rex, spend a marvellous evening with local poets and storytellers, young and old, to celebrate the stories of Australia, its unique landscape, its unsung heroes and to announce the "Dusty Swag Awards".

Rex was brought up on a farm by his aunt and uncle in Tenterfield. He attended a one teacher school and it was here that he developed his love of Australian bush poetry and yarnspinning. Rex would often tell the story of how he and his fellow school mates were required to recite "The Man From Snowy River" perfectly in order to pass their literature exam. Rex was a pilot during WW11 and met my mother Sylvia in Scotland. After the war, mum sailed out to Australia as a War Bride and after marrying, they both settled in Alexandra where Sylvia ran a womens clothing shop and Rex practised as a chartered Accountant. Although never having written his own poetry, Rex was a keen poetry reciter and washboard player.

Tim and I promised Rex that we would carry on the "Dusty Swag Awards" into the future and upon his death in 2018, Rex left a small legacy to this end. I know that dad would be so pleased to know that the "Dusty Swag Awards" are continuing and that the winners will be announced and awards presented at the National ABPA Championships to be held at the Banjo Paterson Festival in Orange during February 2021.

Entry Forms can be downloaded on the ABPA Website

<https://www.abpa.org.au/events.html>



## DUSTY SWAG AWARDS 2020

## INFORMATION SHEET

The "Dusty Swag" Awards were established in 2000 by Patron Rex Tate to encourage poets and storytellers to record the stories of Australia, its unique landscape and its unsung heroes.

Entries are invited from Poets and Storytellers of all ages.

### 2020 Competition Theme "AUSTRALIAN BUSH"

Opening Date: 1/6/2020

Closing Date: 30/11/2020

**JUNIORS (Primary)** Poem 20 lines max: Short Story – up to 200 words  
**SENIORS (Secondary)** Poem 40 lines max: Short Story – up to 750 words  
**ADULTS (Over 18 yrs)** Poem 60 lines max: Short Story – up to 1000 words

Entry Fee per entry \$10 (adults) Children (free)

Prizes will be awarded for 1<sup>st</sup> place (\$100) & 2<sup>nd</sup> Place (\$50) – Adults

1<sup>st</sup> place (\$50) & 2<sup>nd</sup> Place (\$25) – Juniors/Seniors  
(\*\*plus a years subscription to the ABPA)

*\*\*Winners will be announced on Australia Day 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and winners will be invited to present their Poem/Story at the ABPA National Championships to be held in Orange at the Banjo Paterson Festival in February 2021. With the author's permission, winning Poems/Stories are eligible to be published in the ABPA Magazine and on the ABPA Website (see entry form)*

**ENQUIRIES – Christine Middleton 0419526550**

# ABPA LIFE MEMBERSHIP – To Jan Lewis

by Christine Middleton

An ABPA Life membership was awarded recently to Jan Lewis for her outstanding and tireless dedication to promoting Australian Bush Poetry and Storytelling.

For the past 23 years Jan has been the volunteer coordinator of the Poetry and Bush Music Events at Corryong's iconic Man from Snowy River Festival, is the Secretary of the Victorian Bush Poetry & Music Association and represents Victoria on the Australian Bush Poets Association. Jan started writing rhyming poetry in 1977 and has produced a CD - "Beyond the Gate" and a book of original poems - "A Rural Woman's Reflections". Jan's poem "Blooming where you're Planted" was the Winner of the Tumbarumba Heritage Poetry Prize, 1995.

After living most of her life in the Dandenong Ranges, east of Melbourne, Jan moved to the Upper Murray area in north-east Victoria in 1989 and worked for 14 years as coordinator of the Corryong Neighborhood House. Her creative activities there included Top of the Murray Poets & Bush Storytellers and their writing group, Colours of Sound Singing Group., Social Dance Group, teaching Ukelele, Annual Women's Weekends and school holiday activities for children. In the year 2000, Jan received a Victorian Government Rural Women's Leadership Bursary to link her writing with her Community Development work.

Jan lives at Cudgewa with her partner Linton, a sheep and beef farmer, where they both juggle work, family and community responsibilities. Jan enjoys writing her observations of rural living in poems and both she and Linton, who plays the button accordion, often entertain Seniors, community groups and at special events. Jan's compelling natural delivery of her poems appeals to both rural and city audiences alike.

Congratulations Jan. An award well deserved.

*In 1994, the first International Australian Women in Agriculture Conference was held in Melbourne with 800 women. Jan attended and was inspired. A speech titled 'Blooming where you're Planted.' was presented by Cathy McGowan AO, a NE Victorian farmer (Independent Federal Member for Indi 2013 – 2019).*

*The idea for a poem to honour grandmothers came from Cathy, so Jan wrote it and dedicated it to Cathy.*

## **Blooming Where You're Planted (or where you're transplanted even!)**

© Jan Lewis 1995

*Winner of the Tumbarumba Heritage Poetry Prize, 1995*

My gran came from far across the sea to marry her farming man.  
In a rough slab hut crammed with care they eked existence from the land.  
To me she seemed already old when I went to stay with them.  
Her lessons made me who I am, - though I didn't know it then.

We'd spend hours at her big black stove, simmering soup and stews  
or baking golden crusty bread for all the shearing crews.  
We saved her chickens from the foxes, to prepare them for the pot.  
I learnt the mysteries of preserves, the orchard and vegie plot;

Bush quilts were fashioned on her treadle to keep out the winter chill;  
I'd love to prune the roses for a jar on her window sill.  
We'd chop firewood, milk the cow; by lamplight knit and darn.  
Her labour of love was patching while Pa spun us all a yarn.

Gran was amazingly resourceful in the hut or out of doors -  
hoarding paper, string and buttons in kerosene tin chests of drawers.  
A midwife on a bicycle with me running by her side  
and when the new mum held her babe, we'd almost burst with pride.

A tree was planted for each grandchild, for 'dear departed's' too.  
She'd lead me there, her hand in mine. When I felt down - she somehow knew.  
I hope all my female ancestors have left their mark on me -  
their firm belief in family life and giving time so generously.

They had such pride of place, staying on their patch of ground,  
blooming where they were planted with a spirit quite profound.  
Generations of women's knowledge I have absorbed inside by head -  
it's a privilege to have it, but how and where should it be spread?

I have Landcare on my conscience, I need to work full time,  
I'm playing many roles at once, my brain works overtime.  
There'll be some tough decisions in my daily living plan  
but I'll be blooming where I'm planted to face the challenge, just like Gran.



*Jan Lewis with fellow Victorian Poet  
Geoffrey W. Graham*



*Mon and Jan*

# WORKING FROM HOME (THE COVID 19 DILEMMA)

© Len Banks

Two weeks in isolation should not be very hard.  
There's lots of jobs to do in the house and round the yard.  
Because I am retired, I don't have too far to roam.  
I can keep myself in doors; I can easily work from home.

I can watch the television. I can listen to the wireless.  
But all that's on the news is about Corona Virus.

Maybe I need a job, so I honestly could quote  
that I'm gainfully employed, and my work is done 'remote'.  
I'll go right through the list of jobs for retirees  
to find one that will suit my aging expertise.

I could be an uber driver taking rich kids off to school.  
But I'd need a bigger car for the social distance rule.  
And I'd need remote control to attract the highest rate,  
'cause if I had to work from home, I couldn't leave the gate.

I could be a cleaner. I've got the expertise  
to clean windows, shelves and floors; just not down on my knees.  
I'd get paid an hourly rate. Things would glisten where I've been.  
But if I had to work from home, it is my house that I'd clean.

I could be a tour guide for those on holiday.  
So long as they are well and don't want to go away.  
I could show them things exotic, and for an extra fee  
I could do my work from home using virtual reality.

I could sign up for the army as a journo doing writing,  
'cause with drones and long-range missiles there's no close encounter fighting.  
I could read reports online, but the army's real frustration  
is that the enemy's not there. They're in personal isolation.

I could be an undertaker. My black suit's right to wear.  
But I wonder if the graves must be four metres square.  
I could organise a funeral. (Just the wailing could be hard).  
And if I had to work from home, I'd have holes in my back yard.

Now there is one job for me. Lots of money I'd be makin'.  
The only trouble is, I think all the spots are taken.  
It may be a bit boring and it may destroy my soul.  
But I could easily work from home by going on the dole.



# CHILLING

© Len Banks

We've just been through a summer season  
we'd like to be forgetting;  
with fires and dust, on top of drought.  
No wonder we're all fretting.

Now summer's gone. We've had some rain.  
The grass is growing green.  
The autumn leaves are showing colour.  
But we're struck with COVID 19.

So as the winter months come 'round,  
we'll stay at home until  
the days start getting long again  
and we are past this chill.

The chill will come in many forms  
before the winter ends;  
like isolation in our homes  
away from family and friends.

The warmth we get from social groups  
is like a magic pill  
that keeps our minds and bodies strong.  
But for now, we feel the chill.

The kids are getting schoolwork sent  
through electronic means.  
But families who can't cope with that  
will have some chilling dreams.

This chill will hit some businesses  
so hard they'll have to close.  
In fact, you'd hardly call it chill.  
A better word is "froze".

But let's look on the warmer side.  
Our experts have no doubt,  
a vaccine and a cure will come.  
'Till then, we just chill out.



# THE DEAR LITTLE BELLBIRDS

*A Reflection On Henry Kendall*

by Tony Hammill

*'The silver-voiced bell-birds, the darlings of daytime!'*

They sing in September their songs of the May-time;'

So Henry Kendall waxed lyrical in his unforgettable poem 'Bell-Birds' which I'm sure we all encountered in school and from which we can quote passages. The bell-like notes we hear in eucalypt forests are indeed a pleasure to the ear, though they are sharp, metallic tinkles, not 'softer than slumber'; they ring, but they don't run. And perhaps all is not sweet and environmentally sound in the world of the little darlings!

Actually those of us on the east coast actually know more about the Bell Miner *Manorina melanophrys* than we realize through its relative, the Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*, also known as the Mickey or Soldier Bird, which has similar habits. The Noisy Miner is longer than the Bell Miner and is grey to the Bell's olive-green, but both have the yellow beak and the patch behind the eye.

The Noisy Miner is commonly a suburban dweller and makes his presence known. He is social and highly aggressive. Though too small to be an effective bully on his own, in his flock he surrounds other birds, harassing them with his persistent and shrill cry which drives them away from his territory. I've seen them dive-bombing kookaburras, and attacking a ring-tail possum in a melaleuca on our footpath, where the possum's only offence was in trying to get a good day's shut-eye, curled up in a ball. They are assertive, and believe they own the road until sometimes it is too late for them to get out of the path of a car!

Surprise, surprise! The bellbird's habits are rather similar, though they avoid human contact by living in dense forests. The secret life of the bellbird was outed to me by two park rangers, one at our beloved Binna Burra resort in the McPherson Ranges, and one on Norfolk Island. The story was the same: the bellbird moves into a territory and drives other birds away. Those birds had an ecological function in keeping down insect pests which kill the trees; consequently large areas of forest die. The Binna Burra ranger noted that a patch of the local forest was dying since the bellbirds moved in. The ranger on Norfolk had previously worked in the Grafton area and stated that large swathes of forest had died from a similar cause in northern NSW.

So perhaps Kendall's paean of praise to the bellbird was, to put it kindly, somewhat misplaced!

## Bell Birds

*by Henry Kendall*



By channels of coolness the echoes are calling,  
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling:  
It lives in the mountain where moss and the sedges  
Touch with their beauty the banks and the ledges.  
Through breaks of the cedar and sycamore bowers  
Struggles the light that is love to the flowers;  
And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,  
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing.

The silver-voiced bell birds, the darlings of daytime!  
They sing in September their songs of the May-time;  
When shadows wax strong, and the thunder bolts hurtle,  
They hide with their fear in the leaves of the myrtle;  
When rain and the sunbeams shine mingled together,  
They start up like fairies that follow fair weather;  
And straightway the hues of their feathers unfolden  
Are the green and the purple, the blue and the golden.

October, the maiden of bright yellow tresses,  
Loiters for love in these cool wildernesses;  
Loiters, knee-deep, in the grasses, to listen,  
Where dripping rocks gleam and the leafy pools  
Then is the time when the water-moons splendid  
Break with their gold, and are scattered or blended  
Over the creeks, till the woodlands have warning  
Of songs of the bell-bird and wings of the Morning.

Welcome as waters unvisited by the summers  
Are the voices of bell-birds to the thirsty far-comers.  
When fiery December sets foot in the forest,  
And the need of the wayfarer presses the sorest,  
Pent in the ridges for ever and ever  
The bell-birds direct him to spring and to river,  
With ring and with ripple, like runnels who torrents  
Are toned by the pebbles and the leaves in the currents.

Often I sit, looking back to a childhood,  
Mixt with the sights and the sounds of the wildwood,  
Longing for power and the sweetness to fashion,  
Lyrics with beats like the heart-beats of Passion; -  
Songs interwoven of lights and of laughters  
Borrowed from bell-birds in far forest-rafters;  
So I might keep in the city and alleys  
The beauty and strength of the deep mountain valleys:  
Charming to slumber the pain of my losses  
With glimpses of creeks and a vision of mosses.

# You are invited to be part of the 2021 Blackened Billy Verse Competition

The 31st Annual Competition continues the legacy of Tamworth Poetry Reading Group (TPRG).

Since 1991, thousands of entries have been submitted, recording many aspects of Australian country and character. Past Award winners provide exemplary guidance for writers seeking rhyme and metre mastery.

"The Blackened Billy Verse competition has encouraged writers to put pen to paper to produce the most incredible range of rhyming verse, over the years honing their skills to now produce some of the best bush poetry ever written, as good as, if not better than Paterson or Lawson." - Jan Morris, on behalf of the Tamworth Poetry Reading Group (November 2019).

Competition Founder Jan remains a guiding force. The 2021 Billy is in the kiln. Made in the hills of Moonbi, by two blokes who play with clay above where the fibreglass chook is perched to attract tourists and draw attention to the poultry industry. Ian and Fred have been crafting the unique and hard-won Billy trophy annually since 1991.

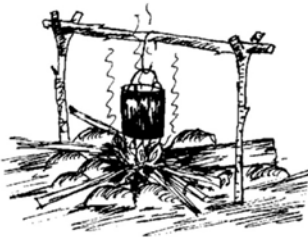
The Billy plaque will be custom-curved and engraved in Tamworth – as it has always been. The winner's trophy plaque will be engraved and attached in the community hosting the awards ceremony. The minor question is where will that ceremony be? The more inviting question is 'Will your name make it onto the Trophy Plaque?'

The 2020 Awards Ceremony was celebrated as part of the Banjo Paterson Australian Poetry Festival. It is anticipated the Awards for the 31st Billy will be announcing during the 2021 Festival, currently estimated to run from 13-20 February. Covid times add question, and Festival organisers will not decide for some time yet about happenings. Late October at earliest. In the interim, entrants should submit the BB2021 entries prior to the 30 November closing date.

In 2020, the Blackened Billy Verse Writing Competition was warmly welcomed by locals, poets and media, with newspaper and television tuning in to capture and share advice of the winners. The success of previous poetry events in Orange has lured an Australian Performance Poetry Championship to Orange for 2021. Excited to see what opportunities are realised, as the Covid-19 saga unfolds.

Entrants for the 2021 Blackened Billy Verse Competition may submit entries via postal or electronic means. Publication of future Tribute Books containing Blackened Billy Winners is likely. Will you be in it?

## \$1000 Prize Pool



<b>First Prize</b>	<b>\$500 plus Trophy and Certificate</b>
<b>Second Prize</b>	<b>\$250 plus Certificate</b>
<b>Third Prize</b>	<b>\$150 plus Certificate</b>
<b>Highly Commended</b>	<b>5 x \$20 plus Certificate</b>
<b>Commended</b>	<b>5 x Certificate</b>

## TECHNOLOGY

© Maureen Stahl

My grandkids all live interstate  
and this is something that I hate.  
I told my daughter how I wished they were not so far away.  
She said, "If you care all that much  
and want to stay in constant touch  
you must learn to use Snapchat I think that it's the only way."

I said, "I have to use Snapchat,  
but tell me what the hell is that?  
Is it another modern thing of which I have never heard?  
You showed me how to do email  
I did it weekly without fail  
but they said they were too long for them to read through every word."

I joined that thing they call Facebook  
and every day I took a look  
to see what new things they had posted, what's happened in their life.  
But then with loads of friends they share,  
comments were flying here and there  
and this Grandma got confused and she soon got herself in strife.

So now instead I'm doing streaks  
I've done them daily these last weeks.  
I take a photo and I send it and then it goes away.  
It doesn't seem to make much sense,  
(at least it comes with no expense)  
and I boast now that I hear from them on every single day.

Their photo may be really dumb  
perhaps a finger or a thumb  
and sometimes they have bitmojis and they look a bit like me.  
The words are few and far between,  
I don't complain or make a scene.  
If this is the way they correspond then this is what must be.

They've taught an old dog some new tricks  
so that her problem she can fix.  
It's a far cry from the cards and letters that we all once sent.  
Technology has moved too fast  
for folk like me who're from the past  
Though it's not the way I'd like it I'll just have to be content

## Back Block Bards

# Bush Poetry Raises \$100K for Dementia Research

from Allan Vagg

My family has always had a long-standing love of bush poetry, creative writing and story-telling going back generations. Growing up as kids (although my wife would say I am still just a big kid!), Dad would read and recite to us all the time many of the classics as well as his own writings. We grew up, and still live, on a sheep & cattle grazing property West of Hillston. With a lot of time sitting on motor-bikes mustering sheep left to our own thoughts, this was well before podcasts were a thing so I guess the foundations were certainly set for story-writing.

As we got into primary school, my sister and I would follow Dad around to various fundraisers and functions locally to recite, he'd do a lot of his own poetry, we would do other people's, and Mum would always be there with the folder following along in case we got stuck.

But we loved the flowing rhythm and rhyme of the bush poems, we found them easy to learn and remember. My sisters' favourite poem to recite was 'Blue Lake Bill the Bunyip', for those who know it it has a running time of about 18 minutes, not a bad effort for a girl in Year 5 to know off by heart! But we were schooled at home by Mum via Correspondence, and I wouldn't swap that upbringing for anything.

Skip a few years, boarding school, college, girls (somewhat unsuccessfully), cricket and rugby (moderately more successfully), and Great Northern (nailed it), I had kept up a bit of writing when inspiration struck but hadn't done a lot over those years.

So, why the back story? Because of what came next in 2013, when Mum was diagnosed with Younger Onset Dementia at age 51. Following all the adjustments to this (skip a couple more years) and still not knowing how or why, we got to a stage where we felt we needed to create a positive out of what was a pretty negative situation. It was Gran who said, "We have all written a bit of poetry, let's put it together into a book and sell it, with all money donated to fund Dementia Research?"

So, we did. Eight authors, all related across 4 generations, became the Back Block Bards.

The book was launched in October 2018 with an art exhibition by Gran, with all proceeds being donated to Dementia Australia Research Foundation. Since then the support for the campaign has been enormous and it has quickly taken on a life of its own. We didn't know what to expect but it has far exceeded any expectations we could have had.

Two years later, 2 re-prints of the book, a CD, a large number of performances including Casino Beef Week where we got to share the stage with Ray Essery & Neil McArthur, we are really proud to announce we have donated a total of \$100,000 to the Dementia Australia Research Foundation, all raised through the Back Block Bards bush poetry campaign.

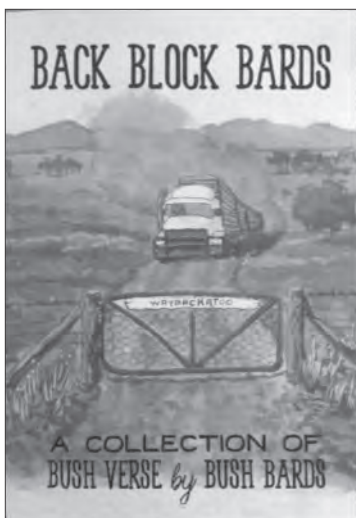
Its just been an incredible result so far, from a personal point of view the support has been overwhelming, from a poetic point of view it is heartening to see the level of support for genuine storytelling in an age of the 24-Hour News cycle and Clickbait headlines on demand.

I have renewed my passion for writing bush poetry and really enjoying it, and huge thanks to the entire Back Block Bards family and committee for their work so far. How good's bush poetry!!

## **BACK BLOCK BARDS**

Back Block Bards is a group of related bush poets and is a contribution to the rich history of bush verse in Australia. All the poets featured are born and bred in western NSW and our verse is largely based on experiences from this area.

We released a book, Back Block Bards, comprising 56 poems in 2018 and recently our first poetry CD, Circle Work In The Carpark!



Following a close family connection with Younger Onset Dementia, the Back Block Bards was formed as a Not-For-Profit group to raise money to fund research into this insidious disease.

Books are \$25 each and CD's \$15 each, available from our website. Every cent raised is donated to the Dementia Australia Research Foundation!



To date we have donated \$100,000 to DARF!

[www.backblockbards.org.au](http://www.backblockbards.org.au)

## Regular Monthly Events

### NSW

**Illawarra Breakfast Poets** meet every Wednesday at 7am at Marco Polo facility at Woonona. Ample parking, everyone welcome.

**"Laggan Bush Poets."** The Laggan Pub, Laggan NSW. The 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 7.30pm. For further details contact Mike or Elaine on (02) 4837 3397

**Gosford Bush Poets** meet at 7pm the last Wednesday of every month at the Gosford Hotel, crn. Mann and Erina Streets Gosford. All welcome. Contact Vic Jefferies 0425252212 or Peter Mace (02)-4369356

**Port Macquarie Bush Poetry Group** meets fortnightly 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 1pm in the Pioneer Room, Senior Citizens centre south end of Gunster St, Port Macquarie. Contact Bill Yates 6583 3360, Barbara 6584 0208 or Bessie 6583 5255.

**Milton Ulladulla Bush Poets and Yarn Spinners Group** First Sunday Every Month at Ex Servos Club Ulladulla 2pm start visitors welcome contact John Davis 02 44552013

**Binalong** - A Brush with Poetry @ Cafe on Queen, 15 Queen St. In the studio by the Balgalal Creek. Last Sunday of every odd month (except January), 2-4pm Open mic. Contact Robyn Sykes 02 6227 4377

**The Queanbeyan Bush Poets** meet at 7pm on the fourth Thursday of the month in the Old School House at Christ Church, 39 Rutledge St, Queanbeyan. Enter via Church Lane. Contact Laurie McDonald on 02 6253 9856

**Port Macquarie Minstrels, Poets and Balladeers** meet fortnightly; 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 1pm in the Pioneer Room, Senior Citizens Hall south end of Munster St, Port Macquarie. Contact Tom Mcilveen 0417 251287

**2nd Sunday** - 2:00 pm Poetry at the Pub Katoomba Blackburn's Family Hotel. All forms poetry, free entry. Contact Denis Rice 02 4782 6623 tdrice3@southernphone.com.au

**Singleton Bush Poets.** Meet at the Albion Hotel, John Street Singleton. 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month. Contact Neville Briggs 02 6571 1398.

**Wombat Bush Poets** meet at 1.30 pm at the Young Hotel for poetry, music and open mic. Last Sunday of even months except December. Contact Ted Webber 0459 707 728

### QUEENSLAND

**North Pine Bush Poets Group** meet at the rear of Coutts Cottage, Old Petrie Town, Dayboro Road Kurwongbah, on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month from nine a.m. to twelve noon. Contact the President Ian on 0427212461 or the Secretary Mal on 0417765226.

**Kuripia Poets** - last Sunday of the month 2pm to 4.30pm, Croquet Hall, 91 Codelia St. Sth Brisbane. Contact Marilyn 0458 598 683

**Geebung Writers** - 9.30 am every 2nd Wednesday of the month at Geebung RSL. Contact Jean (07)32654349

**Bundaberg Poets Society Inc.** 2nd Saturday of the month. Rum City Silver Band Hall, Targo Street. Contact Jayson (07) 4155 1007 Edna 0428 574 651 or Sandy (07) 41514631.

**Beaudesert Bush Bards** meet on the **Second** Friday of each month from 9.30am at the Beaudesert Arts & information Centre, Mt.Lindesay H'way, Beaudesert. Phone 07 5541 2662 or 3272 4535.

**Russell Island Writers Circle** - 2nd Thursday of the month at 9.30 am. St. Peters Church Hall (Next to IGA). \$2 donation. Contact Trish (07)34091542

**Shorncliff "Poets of the Park"** "Poets of the Park" meet at St Margaret's Church Hall in Sandgate, beside the primary. every 3rd Tuesday from 5-45 pm contact 042 15 14 555

**Townsville Bush Poetry Mates Inc** meet every first Tuesday of the month at Aitkenvale Library Meeting Room at 7:00pm. Loads of fun. All welcome.

**Bribie Island Bush Poets** meet at 6.30 pm on the 4th Monday of each month in the Conference Room of the Blue Pacific Hotel, Woorim on Bribie Island. Contact Cay - 07 34083219

**Logan Performance Bush Poets** - meet 2nd Sunday of every month, 9 to 11am at the Beenleigh Historical Village. 205 Mains Road Beenleigh. All Welcome. Breakfast available Ring Gerry 0499942922..

### Victoria

**Kyabram Bush Verse Group**- First Monday, every second month, namely Feb, April, June, Aug, Oct, Dec. at the Kyabram Baptist Church meeting room, crn Fenaughty Street and Lake Road Kyabram 7.30pm. Contact Mick Coventry 0427-522097

**Gippsland Bush Poets** meet Monthly, 7.30pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month at the RSL Hall in Hood St. Rosedale

**Top of the Murray Poets and Bush Storytellers (TOMPABS)** meet Monthly (mostly Tuesdays in Corryong) for writing workshops, Monthly on 3rd Sunday for Music and Poetry at Maurie Foun's 'Poets' Paradise'. Contact Jan Lewis (02) 60774332

**Bendigo Goldfields Bush Poets** - Third Sunday even numbered months, except December when second Sunday. Bendigo Club, 22 Park St, Strathdale (Bendigo) 1.30pm to 4.30pm. Contacts: Geoffrey Graham 03 5446 7104 or Ken Jones 03 5441 5121

**Henry Lawson Memorial & Literary Society Inc.** - Meet third Saturday each month/except January.

Monastery Hall St. rear St. Francis Church. Lonsdale street. Melbourne. All Welcome. From 1-30pm till 4-00 pm. Contact: Maree Stapledon: 0408 100 896

**Mansfield Bush Poets Group** - Second Tuesday of the month 1pm - 3pm, Mansfield Library. Contact Val Kirley 0400 654 596

### WA

**Perth** 1st Friday monthly 7-9.30pm The Auditorium, 26 Plantation Drive, Bentley Park. Contact Rodger 0419 666 168 or Sue 0418 941 016

**Albany** 4th Tuesday monthly. Contact Peter 08 9844 6606

**Bunbury** 1st Monday even months 7pm. Rose Hotel. Contact Alan 0400 249 243 or Ian 0408 212 636

**Geraldton** 2nd Tuesday monthly. Beliar Caravan Park. Contact Roger 0427 625 181

**Kalgoorlie** 1st Wednesday monthly. Kalgoorlie Country Club. Contact Paul Browning 0416 171 809