

## Judges' report

Lorraine Marwood and Claire Saxby

### Overall

We were impressed by the quality of the poems submitted, in fact we feel the overall standard has improved in 2006 compared to last year. 'Backyard' as a topic provided a refreshing and wide-ranging stretch of the poetic imagination.

We had a difficult task choosing the winners because of the quality of the short-listed entries. Winners came from all over Australia and it was a joy to have high a standard of poems submitted by small schools such as the Northern Territory's Katherine School of the Air.

Again this year, the largest volume of entries was in the upper primary section. The winners here were those who moved away from form poems and rhyme to develop depth and originality. The 'backyard' theme was very popular along with poems about water, drought, friendship, family and pets. The mining incident at Beaconfield and racism were also covered by quite a few poets.

The poems in the secondary sections showed a sophistication and risk-taking in structure that was wonderful to see. In both the lower and upper secondary sections, those that moved away from predictable rhyme and delved into the subject matter, whether it be the suggested topic or free choice, would lift the poem to the shortlist pile. The winners from this category showed original imagery, economy of words and an ease with language that was breathtaking and joyous.

### Special mentions

Emma Hannam (Alstonville High School NSW) Runner-up 2006, Highly Commended 2006, Winner 2005 in Senior Secondary.

Zenobia Frost, consistently commended over several years.

Angela Healy (Bray Park State High School Qld) two short-listed poems and one Highly Commended 2006, Senior Secondary.

Miranda Allender (St Michael's College, Tas) Runner-up 2006, Highly Commended 2006, Runner-up 2005, Upper Primary.

Jack Burnham (Caloundra Christian College Qld) three short-listed poems, Upper Primary 2006.

### Suggestions for content

- Fresh imagery is always going to lift your work above the other entries.
- Make what you write authentic to your voice, for example writing about yourself or others in old age sometimes results in clichéd work.
- Details, specific names makes a simple subject much more worthy of the shortlist than an abstract expression of love or loss or friendship.
- Show us how you feel about a subject matter that might be sensitive or political or emotional, don't tell or preach to us, poetry is subtle and full of layers.
- Read your work aloud, if it doesn't sound vital, energetic or interesting or if you trip over a word then you might need to edit and re-write.
- Understand that your first draft is not the final piece. Put it aside. Re-visit, edit, take out words, re-write.
- Avoid clichéd and overused words for example these supposed poetic words: azure, aquamarine, glee, pretty, verdant, garnished, whilst, merry, sapphire, ponder, alas, dappled, yonder.
- Lines in awkward order (inversions) just for their rhyming value do not bring zest to the poem.
- Complex or unusual words can clog the poem. They stifle the free flow of ideas or expression.
- By blocking left in your poem's presentation, you allow the white space of the page to help your poem's clarity and freshness. Readability is all.
- Poems need to make sense. Some poems seemed to suggest by their poems that poetry is not concerned with communication.
- Humour is good too.

### Presentation

- No fancy fonts – this inhibits readability and impact.
- Block the poem left.
- Do not decorate submissions with graphics, pictures, coloured paper, photos or stickers.
- Check spelling and grammar.
- Teacher's comments or corrections on poems do not enhance the poem's chances.
- Images of violence are not acceptable.
- Complete the entry forms fully.
- Please read the rules and ensure all information for the entrant is provided (title, name, age, grade, signatures of both teacher and student etc).

The judges, Lorraine and Claire wish to thank the amazing teachers in schools across Australia who love poetry, read it and encourage their students to write and read it for themselves. The amazing talent and range of subjects covered show that poetry is still a vital component necessary for the development of each child. We also thank Barbara and the hardworking committee for another year of opportunity for poetry in Australia.

*Please Note: Due to the volume of material received it is not possible to provide personal feedback however worthy the situation. We suggest contacting the writers' centre in your State for suggestions.*



## Project officer's report

Barbara Guest

Members of the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society were once again pleased with the number of entries submitted in the 2006 poetry awards.

It was wonderful to see entries coming from so many different schools ranging from big private schools, suburban public and Catholic schools, distance education and home school students, rural and regional schools, special need students and schools of the air.

The 2006 winners are testament to the widespread appeal of these awards with poets coming from Katherine in the Northern Territory, Hobart, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

This year saw the introduction of entries being accepted on-line. While most entries still arrived via the post, the internet provided a fast and efficient means for nearly 700 entries. The website also provided teachers' notes, writing tips and judges' criteria.

On behalf of the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society I would like to thank our judges, Lorraine Marwood and Claire Saxby whose experience and enthusiasm allowed for a very smooth process. Their advice was also very much appreciated.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to our funding partners, in particular the Department of Education, Science and Training. Its support and commitment has allowed the poetry awards to continue to grow. Our link to National Literacy and Numeracy Week also adds significant value to the competition. I would also like to thank Gunnedah Shire Council, Australia Post and QantasLink for their support. Thank you to all the publishers who provided book prizes for our winners and runners-up – Allen and Unwin, Auckland University Press, Five Island Press, Fremantle Art Press, Hachette Children's Books, Lothian Books, Penguin, University of Queensland Press and Walker Books.

Thank you to all the teachers who continue to teach poetry in the classroom and encouraged their students to participate in these awards.

Finally, congratulations to all the students who entered the awards and in particular to the winners and runners-up for writing such creative and beautiful poems.

### 2006 Entry Figures

Total entries	11558
Number of schools	777

### Categories

Senior secondary	914
Junior secondary	2226
Upper primary	6159
Lower primary	2125
Special education secondary	46
Special education primary	70

### State

Australian Capital Territory	312
New South Wales	5516
Northern Territory	112
Queensland	1011
South Australia	762
Tasmania	525
Victoria	2386
Western Australia	933

## Patrons

The Hon John Anderson MP

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## Thanks

Thank you to the following book publishers:

Allen and Unwin

Auckland University Press (UNIREPS, UNSW)

Five Islands Press

Fremantle Art Press

Hachette Children's Books

Lothian Books

National Library of Australia

Penguin

University of Queensland Press

Walker Books

## 2006 Awards runners-up

SENIOR SECONDARY

Emma Hannam, Alstonville High School, Alstonville Qld

JUNIOR SECONDARY

Katherine Tobias

Moriah College, Bondi Junction NSW

UPPER PRIMARY

Miranda Allender

St Michael's Collegiate, Sandy Bay Tas

LOWER PRIMARY

Charlie Gates

Chatswood Public School, Chatswood NSW

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND LEARNING ASSISTANCE, PRIMARY

Kirsten Spencer

Living Waters Lutheran Primary School, Alice Springs NT

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND LEARNING ASSISTANCE, SECONDARY

Alex Yu

Camberwell Grammar School, Canterbury Vic

## 2006 anthology order form

To order, please complete the following details and return form with payment.

(Please insert number of copies required)

___ 2006 Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards Anthology	\$20.00 including GST and P&H
<i>The winning poems along with a selection of the Very Highly Commended and Highly Commended poems</i>	
___ A Poet's Journey, Dorothea Mackellar	\$35.00 including GST and P&H
<i>A selection of Dorothea Mackellar's poetry</i>	
___ My Heart, My Country	\$20.00 including GST and P&H
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