



# Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards 2013



optional theme

*Wherever the  
Wind Blows*

NATIONAL  
PRESENTATION CEREMONY

# 2013 Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards



*The Dorothea Mackellar memorial is 30 years old in 2013.*

## About the Awards

Founded 29 years ago, the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards have grown into Australia's largest and best known national poetry writing competition for school students. Run by a volunteer committee from the district of Gunnedah in north west NSW, they are intended to foster creative writing and a love of country among young Australians.

Dorothea Mackellar's introduction to Gunnedah came from visiting her family's property "Kurrumbede", north of the town on the Namoi River, from her home in Sydney. The landscape is reflected in several of her poems including "My Country", "Burning Off" and "Dawn".

A life size bronze memorial to the poet located near Gunnedah's Visitor Information Centre is 30 years old this year and has undergone a major refurbishment. The statue was erected after an Australia-wide appeal led by Dutch immigrant, the late Mrs Mikie Maas. The inscription on the plaque at its base reads "This memorial was erected by the people of Australia, the children of NSW and local community..."



*Local artist Anne Pickett with this year's trophy.*

## About our trophies

Prize winners in recent years have been presented with highly individual mementoes, designed and crafted by members of the local art community.

This year's trophy is a linocut "Blowing in the Wind" by Gunnedah artist Anne Pickett.

Anne works in ceramics, watercolours, pencil and printmaking. Her fine attention to detail, pleasing compositions and distinctive graphic style have made her work instantly recognisable to art lovers in the region.

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## President's Report

This has been an exceptional year for the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards with almost 10,000 entries.

It is the 30th anniversary of the cast bronze statue of Dorothea on her horse in Anzac Park which was erected following a nationwide public subscription.

This year, with the generous assistance of the Gunnedah Shire Council, BHP Billiton and many others, we have been able to make significant landscape improvements to the area surrounding the statue. This will make it a much more appealing place to sit and ponder the legacy left by both Dorothea Mackellar and founder Mikie Maas. We are very lucky to be able to share this with visitors to Gunnedah and local residents.

I would like to congratulate and thank every single student who was inspired to enter our competition. We are much richer for your efforts and in my mind every one of you is a winner.

John Lemon

Winner – Lower Primary

Josiah May

KNOX GRAMMAR PREPARATORY SCHOOL, WAHROONGA NSW

## *Images of Australia*

The wind takes us on a rainbow of many colours –  
to the rich orange of the outback  
reflected in the wilderness of the sky  
with fingers of gold  
stretched across a canvas  
of burnt red.  
Giant clouds painting the sky like a bucket of spilt paint  
and...  
below  
a single tree, a green twisted shape, taunted by its aloneness.  
*and the breeze moves on...*

Down below  
the land stays gold  
for thousands of miles  
before seeping into reds  
greens, yellows and browns.  
Becoming a quilt of many patterns...  
white dimples on brown stems,  
illuminated leaves trailing down,  
stained hills of scrub  
seamed by wooden stitches.  
*and yet... the breeze moves on...*

Past horribly twisted ghost gums,  
subjects of paranoia,  
laughing and cackling  
as they glow underneath  
the pure white moon  
and point their cold contorted fingers  
upwards  
surrounded by frozen plants who,  
beheld their icy souls,  
and, themselves, were paralysed.  
*with a shudder, the breeze moves away...*

And breathes relief as down below  
inside the water another world lives,  
a mere reflection that is deceiving  
and beautiful.  
Willow trees' leaves hang like  
dangling Christmas ornaments.  
Green and black  
mix and mingle together  
dancing silhouettes  
the sun, shines and shimmers  
*and then the breeze moves on...*

And stops in a room of clouds,  
a circus of acrobatic droplets  
flinging through the air.  
Trapeze artists  
dressed in pink,  
amidst wild elephants roaming  
through the sky,  
accompanied by goofy clowns  
honking their golden noses.  
The sun applauds them  
*and the breeze rests.*

### *Judge's Comment*

This poem effectively gives a bird's-eye view of the Australian landscape. A number of poetic devices have been used, including breathtaking metaphors such as these: 'stained hills of scrub seamed by wooden stitches' and 'a circus of acrobatic droplets'. The poet has ably painted rich and detailed images in the reader's mind with this mature poem.

Runner Up – Lower Primary

**Elaine Hansen**

NORTH AINSLIE PRIMARY SCHOOL, AINSLIE ACT

### *Take Care of the Planet*

When the sun will be dreaming  
And the moon will be out  
The owl will be flying  
Without any doubt  
When the waves will be crashing  
On the sand covered shore  
The crabs will be sleeping  
On the cold ocean floor  
When the leaves will be falling  
From the tall Autumn trees  
I will be dreaming of all that this means.



#### *Judge's Comment*

The poet has used rhythm very well. By repeating the words 'when the' and 'will be' the poet reinforces the idea that life is a cycle, that all she has spoken of has happened before and will again. This gives the reader a sense of comfort. But then the final line makes us wonder if we should take nature for granted and we are reminded of the poem's title. A very thoughtful poem.

#### *Judge's Comment*

An astonishing poem which creates powerful images in the reader's mind. With obvious knowledge of his subject and an excellent command of English, the poet has transformed what to many of us is an alien and somewhat uninteresting topic, into a breath-catching expose of the hidden beauties of science and technology.

Jarrod has resisted the temptation to overwrite. His words are spare, yet so well chosen that they illuminate the topic and exhilarate the reader.

When I read this poem it reminded me of the mesmeric voice of noted astrophysicist, the late Carl Sagan, speaking passionately about the cosmos. Both inspired a sense of awe in me. Congratulations on an outstanding poem Jarrod.

Winner – Upper Primary

**Jarrold Hoy**

CURL CURL NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL, NORTH CURL CURL NSW

### *Letters and Numbers*

Green and black systems,  
Intricate wires weave like lines on a map.  
The roads beat with ancient, solemn, knowledge,  
Speaking secrets never told.

A city of silicon,  
Battery towers and buildings hung with marvellous wire tapestries  
Pulsing and glowing.  
A universe built of perfect numbers

There is a galaxy of electricity  
Nebulae and fire,  
Dust and wind,  
Endless possibility  
A map I cannot read  
Alien images, a code that cannot be broken  
Circuit boards sparkling with meteors of knowledge that I can never reach.

The mazes glow  
A cherry-red inferno  
Burning cold with strange hieroglyphs  
Always repeating  
So many secrets, so many voices  
The history, the future, the passwords, secret languages of numbers,  
Probability  
Possibility  
Brimming with the wasted intricacy of a million fingerprints.

All buried beneath a thousand tonnes of useless information  
Scattered, where everyone but no-one knows where to find  
This is not something from nature,  
It is a silent-thrumming lost-known place  
With perfect patterns of frost and spheres of gravity  
Scientific algorithms  
Circles of a million rivers, electrical veins, cycling

A system  
A galaxy  
A universe  
Within a hard drive

Runner Up – Upper Primary

**Prajusha Mukhopadhaya**

CHERRYBROOK PUBLIC SCHOOL, CHERRYBOOK NSW

*Foggy Winter Days*

As Winter breeze comes  
All windowsills fog and gloom  
I look with my heart.

*Judge's Comment*

A very mature haiku. Deceptively simple. Beautiful. Well done.

Schools' Award

*The Sheelah Baxter Award for Primary Schools*

Oxford Falls Grammar, Oxford Falls NSW

*Schools' Award, Secondary*

Youth Education Centre, Cavan SA

*Commendations*

- Saturday School of Community Languages, Smiths Hill High School, Keiraville NSW
- MLC, Burwood NSW
- Hornsby Girls' High School, Hornsby NSW
- Mackellar Girls' High School, Manly Vale NSW
- Redeemer Baptist School, North Parramatta NSW
- Griffith Public School, Griffith NSW
- Tamworth Public School, Tamworth NSW
- St Patrick's Parish School, Gundagai NSW

The late Sheelah Baxter was a patron and long term supporter of the awards. Her encouragement and interest in younger entrants in particular, is commemorated with the Primary Schools' Award being named in her honour.

Winner – Junior Secondary

**Elisabeth Sulich**

SCEGGS, DARLINGHURST NSW

### *Where Poppies Grow*

The young larks fly over rusted wire  
Over the fields where guns did fire  
Over the fields where diggers fell  
Over the fields, the gates of hell

The young larks fly over poppies red  
Over the fields where the young men bled  
Fly over the hills where shots rang out  
Over the hills where poppies sprout

The young larks fly over crosses white  
Where sleet lashed down in the cold, dark night  
Over the land where blood did stain  
Over land where men groaned in pain

The larks fly over fields muddy and grey  
Over the fields where the soldiers lay  
Over the hills of the men so brave  
For oh so many the unknown grave

The larks still fly there still today,  
But the land is no more cold and grey  
White crosses stand there row by row  
And in Flanders Fields the poppies grow...

### *Judge's Comment*

Seemingly inspired by John McRae's famous war poem 'In Flanders Fields', this poem reflects on the impact and after effects of war, with the larks flying over both wartime scenes 'muddy and grey' and post war scenes 'poppies red' and 'crosses white', highlighting the contrasts.

The use of rhythm and rhyme is consistent throughout, making the poem a gentle mournful song, and the contrasts between beauty and horror are cleverly placed so that the reader is left thinking about both the horror of war and the sense of peace and even hope in the scene today. A beautiful poem.

## Runner Up – Junior Secondary

**Simone Engele**

OXLEY CHRISTIAN COLLEGE,  
CHIRNSIDE PARK VIC

### *The Oak*

Will you come with me?  
Down to the young oak tree.  
We can play games,  
And dance around,  
And make a rope swing,  
And chase our shadows.

Come with me,  
Down to the growing, swaying oak tree.  
We can talk about school,  
And do our homework,  
And gossip about our teachers,  
And tell of our dreams.

Will you come with me?  
Down to the swaying, large oak tree.  
We can speak of our broken dreams,  
And our various crushes,  
And our views on heaven and hell,  
And of our school reports.

Come with me,  
Down to the large, soaring oak tree.  
We can rage about our parents,  
And secretly hold hands,  
And carve our initials into the oak tree,  
And shyly embrace.

Will you come with me?  
Down to the soaring, aging oak tree.  
We can talk of our plans,  
And watch the clouds drifting by,  
And you can stroke my shining hair,  
And we can talk of our love.

Come with me,  
Down to the aging, furrowed oak tree.  
We can plan our wedding,  
And our family,  
And we can kiss slowly,  
And gaze out at the sky.

Will you come with me?  
Down to the furrowed, leafy oak tree.  
We can talk about our daughter,  
And you can place your hand on my swollen belly,  
And you can caress my silky hair,  
And we can talk of our finances.

Come with me,  
Down to the leafy, giant oak tree.  
We can talk about our son's children,  
And we can talk about death in the family,  
And you can rub my dyed hair,  
And you can whisper secrets in my ear.

Will you come with me?  
Down to the giant, old oak tree.  
We can talk about our retirement home,  
And we can make a draft of our will,  
And you can run your fingers through my grey hair,  
And we can talk about heaven and hell.

Come with me,  
Down forever to the ancient oak tree.  
We can sleep forever under the soil,  
And the gnarled roots will embrace us,  
And the oak shall be our gravestone,  
The oak of our childhood and of our love.

### *Judge's Comment*

This is a cleverly wrought poem, exploring the life span with a pair of young friends who grow into and through adulthood together, mirrored by the life of the oak tree which is a constant in their lives.

Each stanza offers a slice of a life stage – from childhood, to teenage years, into first love, right through to resting peacefully in death. With just a few lines, the poet captures the essence of each of those stages. As the pair grows, so too does the tree, from a young sapling through to a gnarled ancient refuge. The repeated line of 'come with me' reminds the reader of the connection between the narrator and her partner, but also invites the reader to come along for the journey. A finely crafted poem.

Winner – Senior Secondary

**Jobelle Roscas**

ROSNY COLLEGE, ROSNY TAS

*Hiroshima*

At 8.15 in the morning  
on August 6th, 1945  
the clocks froze  
in Hiroshima.

I can't remember  
at what temperature  
the air boiled that morning  
when the day had barely begun,  
but I know it was hot enough  
for the fathers stepping out of their homes  
the mothers kissing their husbands goodbye  
the children on the street  
to instantly  
turn to ash.

When Death shuffled along the road that day  
collecting souls in his arms,  
He walked quietly and carefully  
not knowing who it was He was stepping on.  
Even *He* shed a tear.

How deceiving the dust of humans looked  
dancing through the air  
falling on half-melted roofs  
like snow.

On a wall somewhere,  
the outline of a person  
still remains.  
the only reminder  
they left behind.

No, Hiroshima.  
God was not punishing you  
for whatever sin you may have committed  
once long ago.  
No amount of sin could equal this tragedy.  
This was made by people  
just like you.

I bet those men  
in their tin cans, slicing through the air,  
cradling that bomb in the belly of their plane  
that morning, had no idea  
how devastating this could be.  
Yet three days later  
they dared to drop one more  
on Nagasaki.

And if they knew,  
I know they're kicking themselves now.  
Sometimes I can hear those men crying  
on the laps of their mothers  
asking, *what did we do?*  
*what have we done?*

Hiroshima,  
I imagine your streets in the days that followed.  
How the ashes waltzed in the breeze  
and formed hands outstretched like wings,  
how shadows on walls  
rose to their feet and walked instinctively  
home, closing a door that was once there  
on the day  
they wish never happened.

There is word in Japanese  
that literally means  
'explosion-affected people.'  
Years later,  
we are writing your stories.  
We are thinking of you.  
We are all  
*hibakusha*.

*Judge's Comment*

This is a poem which is spine tingling. To be able to deal with such a disturbing topic in a way which embraces the reader shows great maturity. Images of fathers, mothers, children turning instantly to ash are wonderfully powerful, made more so by little details such as a kiss on the cheek which make these real people rather than simply numbers. And the powerful images keep coming – Death shedding a tear, outlines on walls, men crying 'what have we done?'

The technique of using first person voice also helps to make the poem very intimate, as if the poet was a witness to the scene. Certainly, she is showing that this is a topic she cares deeply about. In such a poem it would be easy to use words of blame and condemnation. Instead of telling us how to feel, the poet allows the reader to feel the tragedy through being there – making every reader 'hibakusha'. A well deserving winner.

Runner Up – Senior Secondary

**Rani Jayasekera**

GIRTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL, BENDIGO VIC

*Sticks And Stones May Break My Bones But Words Can Break My Heart*

The poisoned words hurl through the air,  
The muffled sobs and muted tears,  
The fragile webs we weave will tear,  
And desperate prayers fall on deaf ears.

And though cruel words cannot break bones,  
You'll find that from them hurt will stem,  
For hearts don't break from sticks and stones,  
But careless words will shatter them.

And sometimes love is not enough,  
To mend the holes neglect has torn,  
And no amount of lies or bluff,  
Can heal a heart made thus forlorn.

Though maybe time will help repair,  
And soothe the aches and holes and rips,  
It's best to handle words with care,  
For fractured hearts are hard to fix.

*Judge's Comment*

The topic of bullying was a common one among entrants, showing it's a subject close to many hearts. This poem, however, stood out in its handling of the subject, exploring the impact of cruel words.

The imagery of poisoned words hurling through the air, like arrows, torn webs with unmendable tears and rips, and fractured, shattered hearts are all powerful, leaving the reader in no doubt as to the impact of nasty words and taunts.

The choice of an even rhyme and rhythm pattern here is a good one, and is executed well, making the message easily digestible.



Winner – Learning Assistance and Special Education, Secondary

**Benjamin Gibson**

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

### *Salute to the Fallen*

The bravest field that's ever been  
Will wear a cloak of scarlet  
For all the blood that on her flowed,  
For all the death she met.

So listen well, who've yet to hear  
The story of this flower,  
Whose fame was born in war and strife  
In this world's darkest hour.

*Petals caught the blood of heroes  
The soldiers' stories go  
Though now stained red as ruby,  
Were once as white as snow.*

Just as life seeped from dead men's bones  
Then into soil dark  
The land still cries in pain from wounds  
A battle's dreadful mark.

When on this poppy's bloody colour  
Next time you turn your gaze,  
Remember all those Aussie men  
Who died in smoke and haze;

For on that field there died the men  
With courage like no other.  
They were prepared to give it all  
They fought to save their brother.

We owe them then, our praise and honour  
To hold in high repute.  
For all of time to be remembered —  
To you, Australians salute.

### *Judge's Comment*

A cleverly written reflection on the tragedy of war and the importance of remembering the sacrifices made. The imagery of the poppies staining the field red in an echo of the bloody battles fought there is powerful as is the personification of the field itself as a brave woman who bore so much and yet stands strong with her cloak of scarlet.

The poet has used rhyme and rhythm consistently throughout to create a poem which informs and inspires. Well done.

**Theophilus Din**

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

*The Dandelion*

Freedom and Eternity ...  
The dandelion I see will always be a part of me,  
For I am the plant that grows in fields of liberty.  
And for that reason,  
I will be the plant that will give away its eternity.  
For I will die soon ...  
But for a human's simple wish,  
Or whether it be the cause of a gush of wind,  
I know for a fact that this will all be worth it.

My seeds will forever live on  
From generation to generation.  
For the whole world to see,  
Freedom and Eternity.

*Judge's Comment*

A clever poem about the dandelion, which relies on a human making a wish, or a gust of wind, to spread its seed. The poet uses the dandelion as a symbol of hope and of freedom, growing in 'fields of liberty' and spreading its message through giving away its eternity, its offspring growing where the wind takes them, a clever reminder of the competition theme. Well done.



Winner – Learning Assistance and Special Education, Primary

**Alpay Filizkok**

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

*Bees*

A tornado of bees  
Swarming together as one  
Their tiny, transparent wings  
Creating a windstorm.  
Buzzing, flying, zapping through the air,  
Their tiger like skin  
Spell danger.

*Judge's Comment*

The poet has used wonderfully graphic language. Is tornado the collective noun for bees? If not, it should be. Wonderful!

Runner Up – Learning Assistance and  
Special Education, Primary

**Snigdha Singh**

SUTHERLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL NSW

*Rainy Day*

On a rainy day,  
I wish to see the sun shine,  
And you, my love.

*Judge's Comment*

A tender and wistful poem - a love song. Beautiful.

## Judges' Reports



*Our judge for the Primary section, Glenda Millard, is a full time author with 24 published books including 14 picture books, seven junior novels and three young adult novels. She lives in the goldfields region of Victoria.*

I would like to relate a personal anecdote which I think reinforces the impact of Dorothea Mackellar's poetry on generations of Australians.

Earlier this year my father passed away. As I was sorting through his documents I found five small exercise books filled with stories.

I wept as I read them, knowing how much he had missed the bush in his final months.

As I read his faded, spidery writing I came to these very familiar lines;

***'I love a sunburnt country  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.'***

Dad wrote of how often these words came to mind. He finished his story like this;

*'In conclusion, these lines from that wonderful poet, Dorothea Mackellar.'*

***'All you who have not loved her  
You will not understand.'***

This inspired me to get on with the task of reading the thousands of poems that young students from all over Australia have entered in this year's Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards. I'm sure Dad would have loved them.

Once again, these awards have inspired an abundance of poetry and a vast array of styles, techniques and poetic devices including simile, metaphor and alliteration. Extensive vocabulary and comprehension were evident in many of the upper primary entries. Again many students chose the optional theme 'Wherever the

Wind Blows' but equally many chose unique topics. It was noted that there were a large number of sad poems, perhaps reflective of world events, homelessness, war, refugees and bullying.

This being my second year as a judge, I am better acquainted with the awards, and so in some ways I was more prepared for the deluge of entries as they arrived. But I think it would be impossible for me to ever be prepared for the joy I feel when I read an entry which is unique and well-written. Like precious jewels, cut and polished until they gleam, they excite and inspire and remind me of why I agreed to take on this task once again. I must admit to feeling awed at the quality of some of this year's poems.

I must reiterate how very difficult it is to judge entries of this magnitude and quality. Because of this, it can be as little as a spelling mistake or a typographical error which distinguishes one poem over another.

Glenda Millard



*Poet and author, Sally Murphy, is our judge for the Secondary section this year. She is a poet and author of verse novels, picture books and more - thirty two books in total. Sally lives in the south west of Western Australia.*

What a wonderful privilege it is to read so many poems by talented teens from around Australia. The challenge, though, is always in choosing between them and determining which is better than others. Because poetry is, by its very nature, subjective. What appeals to one will not necessarily appeal to others, because poetry is successful when it speaks to the reader or listener in some way. The poems which rose to the top in this year's awards were those which offered the reader (in this case, me) the chance to look at something in a new way, or experience something new. This happens via two means: what is said about the subject, and how it is said. Together those two elements combine to create a third: an impact on the reader.

The poems which I selected for awards of commended or higher ranged in topic, in form and in length. There were lengthy poems and haiku, highly rhymed and structured forms and free verse and experimental forms. There were poems which chose to use complex language and those which used more simple word choice. Some were light hearted, funny, and others were

chillingly serious. What these 'good' poems had in common, however, is that they made me think. When I read them I was left feeling something – happy, or sad, or in awe – and wanted to reread to see just how the poet had made that happen. Some of these poems were on topics which were new to me, or not regularly written about – the poem about the sloth kept pulling me back, for example. Other poems were on topics which have been written about many times before – war, death, sunsets, lost love – but when the poets found their own way to approach the topic so that their poem was different from what's gone before, they worked.

Thank you to the teachers and parents who have taken the time, in what I know is a crowded curriculum, to encourage the love of poetry, and thank you especially to the young poets who have shared their work with me, and with us all. Whether you were a winner or not, your gift is hopefully the experience of knowing that you can write poetry.

Sally Murphy

Community Relations Commission (NSW) Award

## Mele Fifita

GRIFFITH PUBLIC SCHOOL, GRIFFITH NSW

### *Australia Fair*

How different are we in every way?  
The way we eat and the things we do and say  
The countries we come from and the monies we bring  
Our new life in Australia was the most desired thing

What mattered the most was our heart and soul  
That helped us along in our brand new role  
We all came with different faiths and for different reasons  
And we were ready to start like a brand new season

We came with such diverse personalities  
And slowly we began to see new realities  
And soon our beauty and strength began to show  
And care and courage began to glow

Our new friends and neighbours started to listen  
And our hearts opened up and we began to glisten  
Acceptance was the key to our success  
And soon we began to speak about our prowess

Now we are here forever to stay  
Each day we thank God as we pray  
This new land gave us hope and grace  
So different from our original place

This country gave us a place to share  
With all its beauty rich and rare  
We therefore join in to enjoy  
And to advance in Australia's beautiful fair

### *Judge's Comment*

Whilst this young poet might not have used literary devices such as rhyme and rhythm quite as well as some others in this competition, I was very moved by the intensely personal nature of the poem. It's beauty is in its honesty and simplicity.

It is a courageous and balanced poem which does not seek to downplay the daily struggle and difficulties of re-settlement in a foreign and sometimes confusing and alienating country. However it also joyfully and liberally acclaims tolerance, acceptance and change.

I feel that this poem truly exemplifies all the fundamentals which the CRC award seeks to embody. It is a paean of hope.

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