



Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

# National Presentation Ceremony



2011

Optional Theme

*Making Pictures*

# 2011 Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

## *About the Awards*

The Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society, which is the organisation that oversees the annual poetry awards, was formed in 1983 in the north west NSW town of Gunnedah by a group of local residents.

A key driver in its foundation was Dutch immigrant Mikie Maas who was struck by Dorothea Mackellar's poetry and the local landscape which gave inspiration for many of her works.



*The Mackellar property, "Kurrumbede", c.1917*

The Mackellar family were landholders in the area up until the 1930's and Dorothea was a frequent visitor to their property "Kurrumbede." The property, which borders the Namoi River, was sold to coal mining interests in 2010 and it is understood the homestead, although having undergone substantial changes since the Mackellar's tenure, will be preserved.

Mrs Maas launched the first poetry competition which attracted 300 entries. The judges were Joan Phipson and Rosemary Dobson. The awards have grown to become a national competition for all Australian school children, drawing up to 15,000 entries.

Fund raising initiatives have resulted in the erection of a bronze statue of Dorothea Mackellar riding side saddle which sits opposite the town's Visitor Information Centre. A collection of 32 watercolours by the late artist Jean Isherwood, illustrating her famous poem "My Country", hangs in the town's Creative Arts Centre.



*Bronze statue of Dorothea Mackellar*

## *About Our Trophies*

Winners and runners-up this year each receive a framed hand-coloured linocut by Gunnedah artist Anne Knight.

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 trophies carry special significance as Anne is a founding member of the Dorothea Mackellar Memorial Society and continues to play an active and vital role within the organisation. A well known children's poet (published as Anne Bell) as well as an accomplished artist and printmaker, she generously offered to provide artist's prints as prizes. Anne's gesture seems particularly fitting with this year's theme, Making Pictures.

Winners take home "The Cloud Chasers", a recent linocut, while runners-up receive a print entitled "The Scarecrow." The latter was included as an illustration in Anne's 2002 book, "Muster Me a Song" which was shortlisted in the New South Wales Premiers' Award.

*"It is good to think of others deriving the same joy from poetry as I have - even if it is just one kid....."*



*Local artist and poet, Anne Knight*

## WINNER, UPPER SECONDARY

Hrishikesh Srinivas

SYDNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL, DARLINGHURST NSW

*Whyalla Beach*

From lunch to sundown driving through dust,  
 At Whyalla we stopped a few hours.  
 How could it be a port, when there was  
 no sea in sight, no hotel resort?  
 A marine museum waved from the side  
 Incongruous, embedded in rock,  
 the Onesteel factory wearing a tin grey frock,  
 that mocked the plans by *which we were to abide*.

A deep dazzling orange place,  
 where the machinery touched the water(!), tentative,  
 and the bluest sea licked the shore wide.  
 There were a few on the public space,  
 children in the waves, a family fighting  
 in the huge pool off to the side,  
 fishermen on the jetty with rods and netting,  
 the odd ship the horizon dotting.

On the rocks they were playing  
 some sort of game with the water,  
 young dark and burnt figures swaying  
 together, their voices rising above the wind.  
 On the other side they were diving  
 from a ledge, the family with floats  
 pushing each other off, past them  
 the factory outlines gleaming, further on few boats.

We walked along the jetty,  
 didn't care much for the town,

orange in the light glinting  
 off dusty windows as the sun went down.  
 A huge pelican sat high above us-  
 Scary, to recall its impervious unmoving eye  
 -and its taking off was the sound of  
 a great rushing, impressive scoff.

We watched it veer in the gusts  
 which slapped around us forcefully.  
 The lookout, further up the town of rust,  
 seemed quiet and untouched by the harsh winds.  
 The shelters wore the smell of pee.  
 We didn't stop, instead observing  
 the men with buckets, rods in the sea,  
 walking back while it boiled beneath.

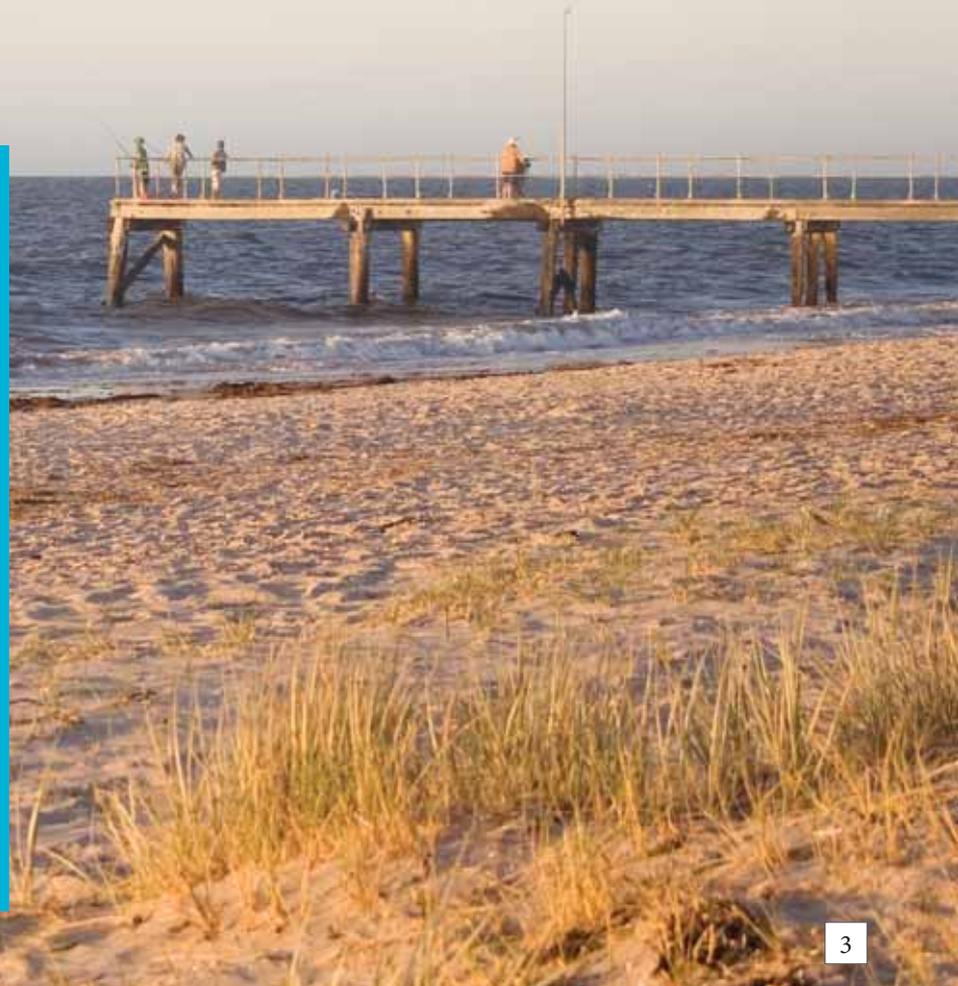
From the car we stood and watched  
 the wind and waves lashing against each other,  
 and as we got inside the sound was smothered  
 in the door.  
 We didn't stay there,  
 We stayed elsewhere.  
 But the rush of the bird's flight  
 enmeshed in the roar of the wind  
 with the sea embroiled in a fight  
 didn't want to leave, so we let it in.

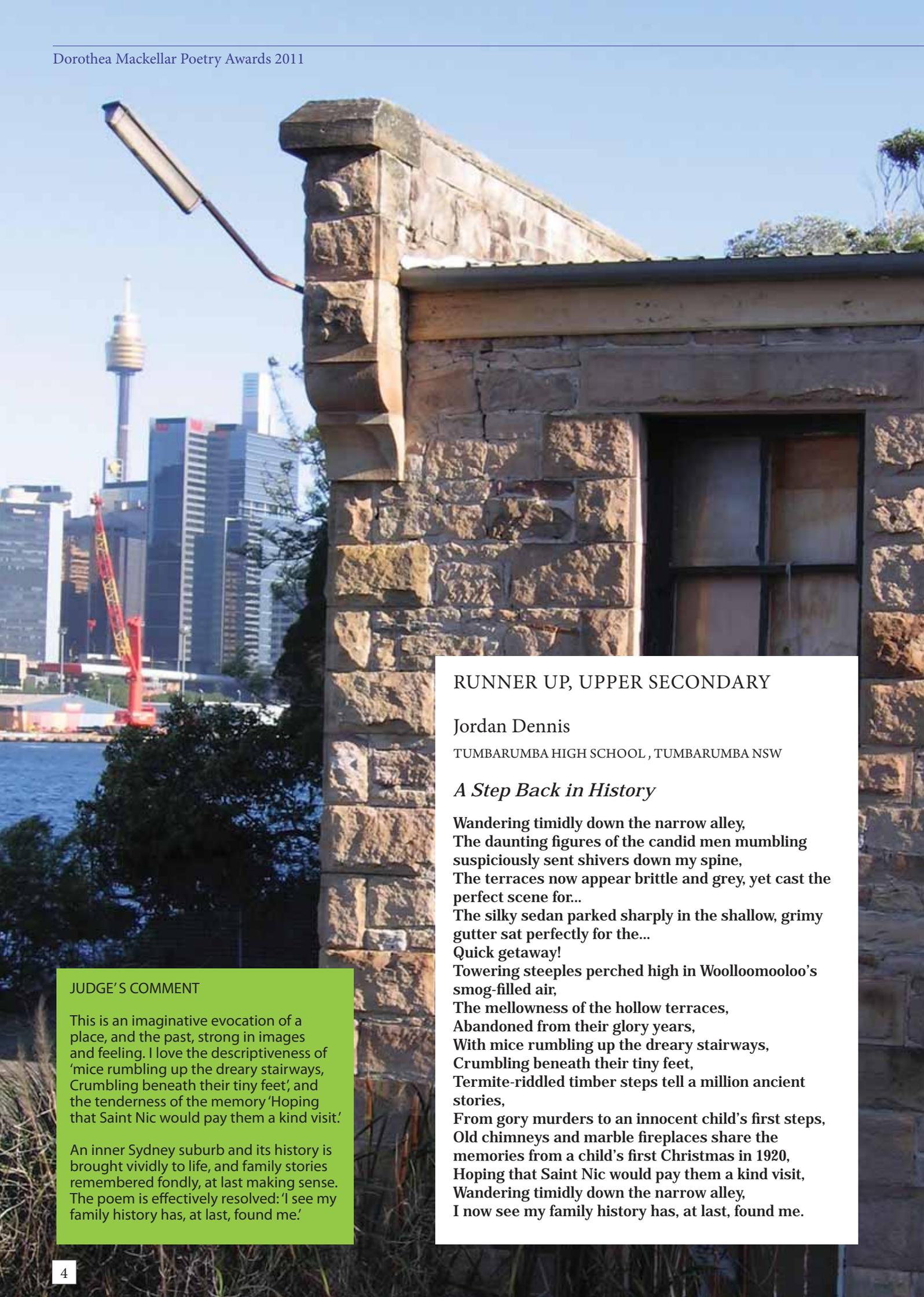
## JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a memorable and moving poem. From the opening lines, with their low-key, almost casual grace, it describes a place with such feeling and originality that the reader cannot help being drawn in. The 'Onesteel factory wearing a tin grey frock' and the 'great rushing, impressive scoff' of a pelican taking off, are some of the images that make this poem so impressive.

But underneath all this there is a growing sense of loss and loneliness, and something indefinable, the mysterious power of place and the sea. This perhaps comes from the elegiac rhythms, the phrasing and choice of words, and the observations of people and place. The final line resolves the poem beautifully. '(It) didn't want to leave, so we let it in.'

We have all passed through places that change us in some subtle way. We take them away with us. In reading this poem, we have experienced Whyalla Beach.





## RUNNER UP, UPPER SECONDARY

Jordan Dennis

TUMBARUMBA HIGH SCHOOL, TUMBARUMBA NSW

### *A Step Back in History*

Wandering timidly down the narrow alley,  
The daunting figures of the candid men mumbling  
suspiciously sent shivers down my spine,  
The terraces now appear brittle and grey, yet cast the  
perfect scene for...

The silky sedan parked sharply in the shallow, grimy  
gutter sat perfectly for the...

Quick getaway!

Towering steeples perched high in Woolloomooloo's  
smog-filled air,

The mellowness of the hollow terraces,  
Abandoned from their glory years,  
With mice rumbling up the dreary stairways,  
Crumbling beneath their tiny feet,

Termite-riddled timber steps tell a million ancient  
stories,

From gory murders to an innocent child's first steps,  
Old chimneys and marble fireplaces share the  
memories from a child's first Christmas in 1920,  
Hoping that Saint Nic would pay them a kind visit,  
Wandering timidly down the narrow alley,  
I now see my family history has, at last, found me.

### JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is an imaginative evocation of a place, and the past, strong in images and feeling. I love the descriptiveness of 'mice rumbling up the dreary stairways, Crumbling beneath their tiny feet', and the tenderness of the memory 'Hoping that Saint Nic would pay them a kind visit.'

An inner Sydney suburb and its history is brought vividly to life, and family stories remembered fondly, at last making sense. The poem is effectively resolved: 'I see my family history has, at last, found me.'

WINNER, LOWER SECONDARY

Elizabeth Waldron

NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS  
NEWTOWN, NSW

*Verfremdungseffekt: Estranging the Audience*

Distaste curls your lips  
As you view the strangers

The little old ladies  
With umbrella frames  
And chicken-bone hands;

The too fat and too thin,  
Who warp the landscape  
Smiles sickly as treacle;

The gossips and gawkers,  
A cascade of whispers –  
Rumour by rote;

Your own self, for being,  
Deep down,  
Past the layers  
That mar the progress of sympathy,

Repulsed.

Disgusted by:

The homeless who huddle –  
Compassion is required,  
But they *reek*;

Recoil from;  
The apologies, which really,  
When stripped of all glamour,  
Really say –  
“I know you were wrong”;

The disciplinarians who shape your expectations  
But wind up your conscience  
And ruin relationships –

mothers and judges, doctors and teachers, policemen  
and sports coaches, lawyers –

Lawyers that quibble over “thou shalt not”;  
Women who compulsively root out people’s failings;

Your own self for not being open-minded enough to  
keep from categorising people  
To not quietly sneer  
In disgust, in fear,  
At –

lesbians, gays, the disabled, the homeless, the elderly,  
women, children, teenagers, yourself –

Your own self.

JUDGE’S COMMENT

This poem first drew me by the exactness of its word choice, and its sentiments. The rhythm has the effect of slowing the reader down, of making one think. *Verfremdungseffekt* is, broadly speaking, a dramatic device to make the audience see the familiar in a new way, of challenging assumptions. Many feel that this is the role of all art - to make the audience see freshly, and think about things differently.

Cleverly, and with great confidence, this poem challenges us to think about how we perceive others, and ultimately, ourselves. It demands to be read many times, and is rewarding with each reading.



RUNNER UP, LOWER SECONDARY

Clara Borg

ACADEMY OF MARY IMMACULATE, FITZROY VIC

*Polaroid Dreams*

The light casts strange shadows through the curtains  
Flimsy drapes barely hiding her from the sun  
Which dapples the floor and warms her bare feet

She dreams Polaroid dreams  
Of angles and shadows and the perfect smile  
All captured in exactly the right moment,  
A moment of chance and of flawlessness  
Hung up in the rows of her mind and nailed there for  
all to see

She travels  
Her camera slung around her neck, its buttons faded  
and worn  
Capturing images

Of orderly towns – quaint and huddled within their  
neat picket fences and mulberry bushes  
And then of the rambling country, ancient castle ruins.  
Royal bloodshed and bluestone courtyards tickle her  
fancy and then  
She is whirling through the air, the sky with its clouds  
shaped like smiling dimples and the rosy lips of the  
sun swallowing her in its azure madness.  
It holds her until the sun is conquered by the moon -  
an elusive silvery orb that cradles her and cultivates  
her fantasies with spoonfuls of shimmering stars.  
Of nature she dreams

Then she is dropped into a bustling city, loud and  
animated.  
She stalks the streets, captures images of life  
Of sprawling graffiti, vulgar political views scribbled  
over a dilapidated factory door  
'Hope is dead' they write' - hidden in a filthy corner  
they weep  
Towering skyscrapers loom, their shadows casting  
darkness over lazy vandals.

Perfectly lined streets, crisscrossing over each other  
amidst the absolute chaos of time.  
And now it is night, and the buildings allow themselves  
to fade into darkness.

Garish signs flash from every direction.  
The people become louder, dancing and stumbling  
She is giddy with the fascination and temptation of  
glamour.  
Of cities she dreams

No-one stops to appreciate the trees from across the  
river, beyond the polluted, taxi-strewn streets, she  
thinks absentmindedly.  
They look eerie against the grey-blue sky of early  
morning.

Their leafless spindly branches cast off at all angles,  
creating a twisted network of delicate etchings into the  
sky.

She is restless now and lets herself be carried away  
into the bosom of the sea.  
Waves rock her and send her sprawling in a salty  
stupor.

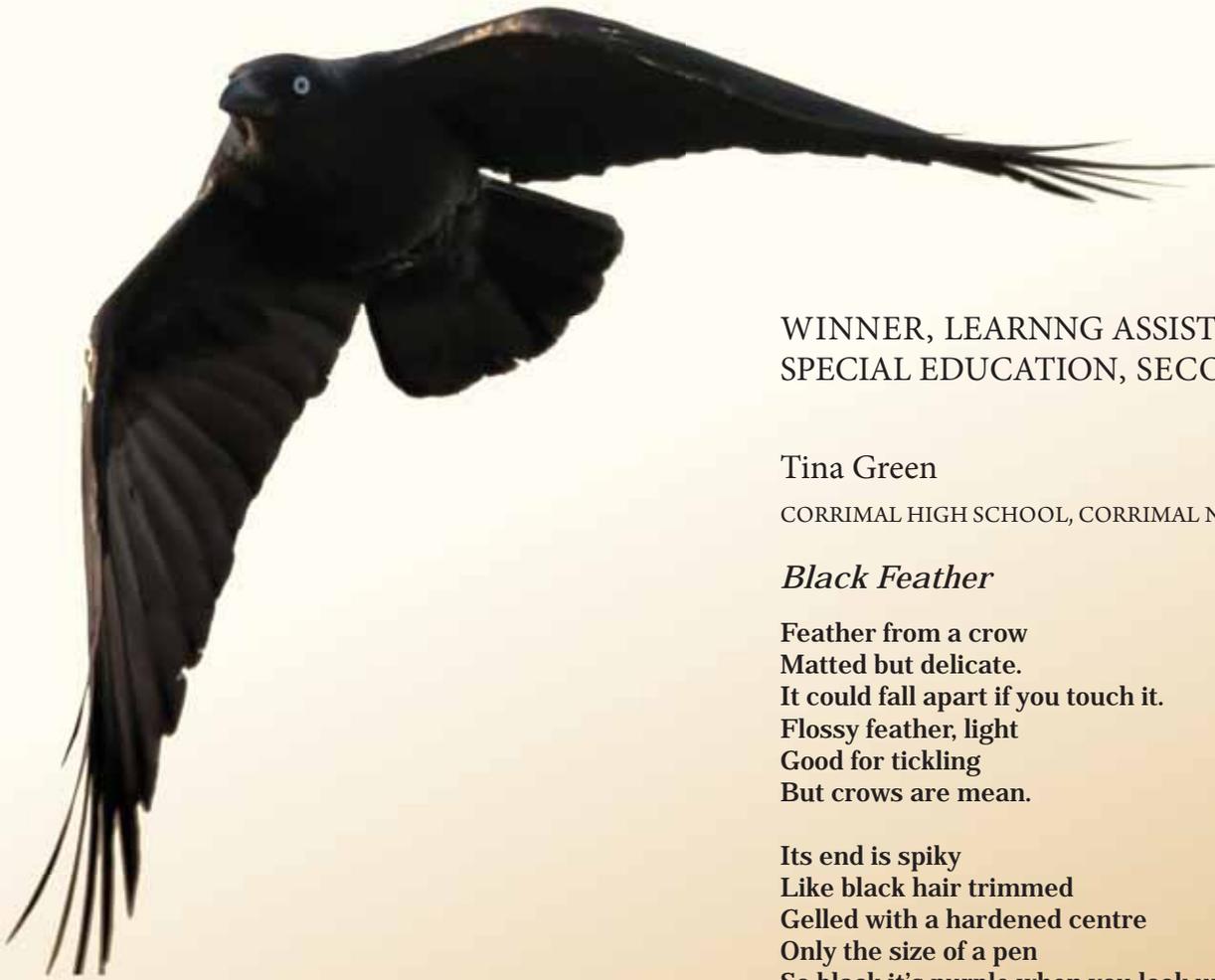
She plunges deep into the depths of the ocean.  
And now she swims with the fish, wraps kelp around  
her ankles, wears sea-daisies in her hair.  
Of seashells and the ocean she dreams.

All these images captured within a tiny roll of film  
Wound up tightly in her pocket  
But more precious than gold  
And more beautiful than all she has seen  
Is the love that her heart now shelters

The love for the invention of imagination  
Which allows her to visit these places whenever she  
wishes.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This beautiful, lyrical poem is a dizzying ride through the imagination. The rhythm and phrasing is sure and seductive, the images beguiling. A waterfall of words, full of optimism and dreams, and the energy of youth.



WINNER, LEARNNG ASSISTANCE AND  
SPECIAL EDUCATION, SECONDARY

Tina Green

CORRIMAL HIGH SCHOOL, CORRIMAL NSW

*Black Feather*

Feather from a crow  
Matted but delicate.  
It could fall apart if you touch it.  
Flossy feather, light  
Good for tickling  
But crows are mean.

Its end is spiky  
Like black hair trimmed  
Gelled with a hardened centre  
Only the size of a pen  
So black it's purple when you look up close.  
Keep as a memory.

Crows make weird sounds  
Like someone's coughing.  
Crows are black.  
I don't like crows.  
They stare, their head on the side.  
An evil look.  
Angry Crow.  
Black Feather.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a memorable and lovely poem, full of directly observed images. There is nothing stale or second-hand about the observations - it is sincere and original.

I like the juxtapositions: the feather is 'Good for tickling/But crows are mean.' There are beautiful lines, simple and sure: 'Keep as a memory.'

The poem moves from descriptions of the feather to the crow itself, and the writer's feelings about those birds. This is a fresh way of looking at a crow, bringing out the very essence of the crow from an examination of one part.

RUNNER UP, LEARNING ASSISTANCE AND  
SPECIAL EDUCATION, SECONDARY

John Scott

HOLY SPIRIT COLLEGE, BELLAMBI NSW

*Silence*

As the music rises it calms my mind  
but in its wake is a screaming silence.  
All I hear is the ringing of that profound silence  
even with the sound  
of cannon fire it does not dull its rage .

With the flaming torches there is an eerie glow  
that reminds me that we are not of this land  
and that it is not ours to claim.

As all of us march on the front we are forever in the  
screeching clash of war,  
with the shouts of men and the tearing of metal and  
flesh,  
I am still over come by that same silence that is my  
calling

So here we are amongst friendly foes and needless to say  
their smiles are of wicked descent.  
with their foreign horns baying on the wind  
and their marching drums thumping in constant rhythm  
It is at this moment I found my silence is no more.



JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a vivid portrayal of the effect of war on one man's mind. It is personal, imaginative, with a sure rhythm and well-chosen words. An impressive poem.

RUNNER UP, UPPER PRIMARY

Richard Garth

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

*The End of 'The World'*

What will you find at the end of 'The World'?  
What will be your surprise?  
What will you see at the great drop-off?  
A rock, a river, more skies?

I know what's at the end of 'The World',  
Not a castle, a dragon or key.  
Whenever you actually write 'The World'  
The answer is a 'D'!

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This clever riddle poem will have the reader smiling at its simplicity. Whilst a clever reader may see the answer coming, the crafty composition will still delight. The poet makes strong use of rhyme and a rhythm pattern which is upbeat and works well for the subject matter.

WINNER, UPPER PRIMARY

Msgana Akele

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

*The Colour of Love*

To paint the edge of the world  
Using white and blue  
Healing for the sick.

To stipple the edge of the world  
Using orange mixed with red  
Bread for the hungry.

To scrape the edge of the world  
Using brown and grey  
Homes for the homeless.

To splash the edge of the world  
Using aqua  
Quenching thirst.

To stain the edge of the world  
Using purple and crimson  
Clothing the naked.

To airbrush the edge of the world  
Using pink and yellow  
Hope for the desperate.

To dribble the edge of the world  
With silver and gold  
Joy for the down-hearted.

A masterpiece of love.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a very mature poem which brings the competition theme to life beautifully. The use of a range of artistic techniques as symbols, and the excellent word selection makes this poem a delight to read and to ponder.

WINNER, LOWER PRIMARY

Emily Penfold

MIANDETTA PRIMARY SCHOOL, DEVONPORT TAS

*I Remember*

I remember my first day at school  
when I had just turned five,  
I was so excited but a little scared inside.  
I had a brand new school bag  
and an art smock I could use,  
a summer dress, a yellow hat  
and shiny buckled shoes.

I remember my sixth birthday,  
we had some pink balloons,  
I had a little party but it ended much too soon.  
Mum made a fairy castle cake,  
fit for any queen,  
a jelly moat, and four tall towers  
(but one was on a lean).

I remember the first time I flew,  
soaring way up high,  
my tummy, it felt queasy and I had big butterflies.  
The sights of the big city  
and adventures that we had,  
a carriage ride, Christmas lights,  
leaving felt so sad.

I remember scorching summer days  
relaxing at the beach,  
seagulls circling high above, cry out their hungry  
screech.  
Exploring shallow rock pools  
and building castles high,  
finding seashells and scuttling crabs,  
till the sun fell from the sky.

Memories are the pictures  
we keep within our hearts,  
that's what my dad has told me right from the  
very start.  
These are just some snapshots,  
that I thought I'd share a while,  
precious treasures, mine to keep  
that always make me smile.



JUDGE'S COMMENT

The comureposition of this poem is very mature for this age group. The use of a fairly complex rhyme pattern works well, and the use of near rhymes in some of the couplets adds to the overall flow rather than detracting. The rhythm is also complex and well executed.

The reader is taken on a sensory journey through childhood with a beautiful collection of images.

RUNNER UP, LOWER PRIMARY

Joel Lye

TAMWORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL, TAMWORTH NSW

*Trumpular Tree*

Sitting lazily under a trumpular tree  
Listening to the wind blow  
The autumn leaves touch my cold face  
And warm it like sunshine.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a lovely picture evoked in four well composed lines, showing that a poem does not have to be long to pack a punch. The reader finds herself sitting there under that tree with the poet, basking in the warmth.

WINNER, LEARNING ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION, PRIMARY

Theophilus Din

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

*Firefly*

The firefly flew in the sky at night,  
What I saw was a glamorous flight.

The firefly flew to an old gum tree,  
It buzzed, glowed and fluttered at me.

The firefly illuminated the dark,  
it hovered and buzzed around the bark.

The firefly was bright to see,  
It hovered and fluttered around little me.

The firefly was a star in space,  
It was so hard to find a trace.

The firefly flew at the open sky  
I guess it's time to say 'good-bye'.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This beautiful rhyming poem buzzes and flits just like its subject. The poet has chosen to use rhyming couplets, each offering a glimpse of the firefly as it moves through the poet's line of sight, taking the reader along on its flight. Lovely.



RUNNER UP, LEARNING ASSISTANCE  
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION, PRIMARY

Lachlan Bolton

REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL, NORTH PARRAMATTA NSW

*The Hunt*

I saw them first  
Spouting water  
Erupting from the surface  
Of the deep, blue sea.  
Their movements graceful in an enormous way  
Gliding sufficiently through the water  
Tails slamming as if trying to get someone's  
attention.

But it's not all play.  
Then there's the hunt.

Circling their prey in an exquisite way  
Creating a cage of bubbles  
Around the herring,  
Sealing them in their living tomb.  
Answering the humpers call they dive as one  
Ascending through the cage,  
Springing mouths wide  
Engulfing a tonne of fish  
Time and time again  
The same action repeated  
Again and again  
In the same way  
Breaching the surface of the water  
And splashing down again.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This poem presents a well wrought picture of whales at sea - gliding, playing and hunting. The change of pace from the lumbering grace of the first stanza to the action of the hunt in the last is separated by the effective transition of the middle two lines.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
COMMISSION (NSW) AWARD

Chantelle Tran

PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL, WETHERILL NSW

*Sorrow*

To adapt to the splashes of the waves,  
to adapt to the months, the hours, the days.  
To know your way across the seas,  
to not living where you please.

To know when but to not know where,  
just knowing that you wouldn't stay there.  
The crowd rushes in numbers, one to ten,  
getting ready to travel once again.

Moving every few months, moving once in a while,  
making different friends, seeing them smile.  
It breaks your heart to know you have to go,  
it feels your heart with such a sad sorrow.

Moving homes, moving from place to place,  
sometimes having to build camp, a new base.  
From Winter to Summer, to Autumn to Spring,  
a new month, a new year, a new beginning.

Sometimes I want to stay but can't,  
this is the life of a migrant.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

This is a quiet poem, full of the sorrow of the title. The gentle rhythms and the clearly expressed feelings build up a picture of the writer's life.

It is thought-provoking and emotive, prompting compassion and, hopefully, greater understanding.

## About our Judges



Joanne Horniman writes young adult novels. She is the author of numerous books including the 2002 CBC Honour Book, *Mahalia*, and *Secret Scribbled Notebooks*, which was shortlisted in

the Older Readers section of the 2005 CBC Book of the Year Awards, and won the 2005 Queensland Premier's Literary Award for best Young Adult Novel.

She has worked as the Assistant Editor on the NSW Department of School Education's School Magazine, lectured in children's literature and writing to trainee teachers, taught adult literacy at TAFE, and been a judge for the NSW Premier's Awards.

Joanne writes full-time, and currently has a Literature Board New Work grant to complete a novel. Her most recent book, *About a Girl* (Allen & Unwin) was published in February, 2010 and is shortlisted for the CBCA 2011 Book of the Year.

Sally Murphy is a poet and author of verse novels, picture books and more – thirty books in total. Her first verse novel, *Pearl Verses the World*, was a 2010 Honour Book in the CBCA Children's Book Awards, and



her second, *Toppling*, won the Mary Ryan Award, 2010, in the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and is shortlisted for CBCA 2011 Book of the Year.

Sally teaches English and drama, and also runs popular book review site, [Aussiereviews.com](http://Aussiereviews.com). When she's not teaching or reading, Sally is a busy mum, with six kids, a husband and a dog.

## President's Report

The past year has been a transformative journey of progress and achievement.

Not only are the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards continuing to thrive but the milestones in 2011 have been numerous.

Teachers and students will have noticed our bright new website launched earlier this year. We hope the content is helpful and encouraging and early indications are that it has been.

Sponsorship has been a major focus and we were relieved and overjoyed when the federal government decided to renew its substantial support of the awards for the next three years.

It has also been a year of evolution. One of our new sponsors is Coalworks, a mining company which has bought the former Mackellar property "Kurrumbede" and is keen to see children's poetry recognised and a local literary connection continued. Another new sponsor was gas company Santos which funded a venture of a different kind. Poetry workshops were held over three days at eight schools across northern NSW by children's poet Jackie Hosking. The initiative was so well received, the committee would like to see the project extended to other parts of Australia as it is a positive way of giving back to the educational community that supports us at the same time as raising awareness of the competition.

We thank these sponsors along with Gunnedah Shire Council, BHP Billiton, Whitehaven Coal, Qantas, Ramsay Agribusiness, NSW Community Relations Commission and Regional Arts NSW for ensuring these awards reach out on a local and national level.

Entry numbers continue to climb as the online entry format becomes more familiar and streamlined with more than 8000 poems passing the judges' eye.

The stature of our judges this year only underlines our status as the leading national children's poetry competition. Joanne Horniman and Sally Murphy are not only widely known and published authors themselves but they were both award-shortlisted by the Children's Book Council of Australia. They bring a knowing and discerning eye to this difficult process.

But none of this happens without the young poets who pour time and thoughts into their entries. We congratulate you and look forward to reading your work again.

*Philippa Murray*

## Schools Award

*Winner* Redemeer Baptist School, North  
Parramatta NSW

*Runner Up* Holy Spirit College, Bellambi NSW

### Special Mention

James Ruse Agricultural High, Carlingford NSW  
The Hutchins School, Sandy Bay TAS  
St Michael's Collegiate School, Hobart TAS  
Presbyterian Ladies College, Burwood VIC  
Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy VIC  
Prairiewood High School, Wetherill NSW  
Emmaus Christian College, South Plympton SA

## Judge's Report - Secondary

This year's optional topic, 'Making Pictures' prompted several interpretations – there were poems about paintings, either in general, or particular, and poems about artists. Some poems took a photograph as a starting point; some were news photographs that prompted compassionate thoughts about their subjects. One of two poems were about 'making pictures' with words, which is one way of looking at poetry itself.

Many entrants chose their own topics. Very strongly represented were poems full of compassion for others: of animals caged and abused, refugees, hunger, poverty, war, illness. There were poems about the pain of social exclusion, and bullying, including cyber bullying. There were also poems full of love: of family and friends and pets. Sadly, some poems were about the disappointment of families that weren't nurturing enough. Many poems contained a thoughtful wisdom.

The standard of the winning poems was very high, written by students who obviously read and write poetry regularly. Reading poetry, immersion in it, is a way of fostering a keen ear for the music of poetry, and for its language. In this way we can train our minds to think more deeply, observe more carefully, and choose words with more precision.

Congratulations to all students and teachers who submitted work this year; it was a pleasure reading your work.

*Joanne Horniman*

## Judge's Report - Primary

As a teacher, I have often watched the faces of my students become closed when I tell them they are going to be writing poetry. When I see looks of fear, boredom, or just disinterest relating to poetry, I always feel a little sad – because a child who doesn't like to read or to write poetry has missed out on something somewhere along the line. Good poetry can give the reader a life experience in the space of just a few lines. And writing poetry allows the poet the chance to paint those life experiences with strokes that the whole world can see.

Judging this year's entries was a delight for me because I could see that there are thousands of students, and hundreds of teachers, for whom poetry is pleasure. Long or short, structured or not, poems touched me, teased me, tickled me, taking me on a wonderful journey around Australia and into the hearts and minds of Australian children.

The theme of this year's contest – Making Pictures – inspired many poems about different forms of art and visual imagery. Many used metaphors of painting to draw word-pictures on a range of topics. Other young poets chose not to use the optional theme, with their poems ranging from light-hearted word-play to very serious topics including death and dying, reconciliation.

Another joy for me as reader was seeing the diversity of form. From the acrostic and diamante – particularly popular among junior poets – to very structured rhyming poems, to free flowing verse, this diversity enhanced my reading pleasure. The best poems were not of any one particular form, however – whether rhymed, or unrhymed, patterned or not, what made each of the winning and commended poems stand out was two things. Firstly, the rhythm of the piece, making it a pleasure to read on the page and out loud, so that the reader is not aware of the structure of the poem. A good poem is pleasing to read. Secondly, the poems which really stood out distilled some aspect of life, or a life experience, into their lines. A good poem takes the reader on a journey, making him or her nod in agreement, or gasp in disbelief.

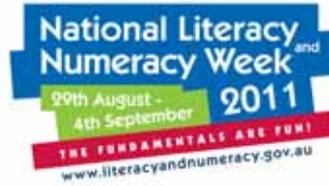
To those students who didn't win awards – don't be disheartened. Just having written a poem is a victory in itself. You are all winners.

*Sally Murphy*

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