



Pictured from left: back row, Danuta Earle, Rae Sinclair (Youth Education Centre SA), Robyn Stannard (Oxford Falls Grammar NSW), Richard de Crespigny, Benjamin Gibson (Redeemer Baptist School NSW), John Lemon, president; front row, Mila Stone, project officer, Elisabeth Sulich (SCEGGS NSW), Josiah May (Knox Grammar NSW), Jarrod Hoy (North Curl Curl Public School NSW), Alpay Filizkok (Redeemer Baptist School NSW), Glenda Millard, Sally Murphy, Coral de Crespigny. (Image courtesy Namoi Valley Independent)

Dorothea MacKellar Poetry awards mark another huge year

This was a big year for the Dorothea MacKellar Poetry Awards, marking its 29th birthday with a very healthy turnout; 10,000 budding poets from over 700 schools submitted work of a precociously high standard, another ringing endorsement of poetry’s popularity among young writers.

Winners were announced at the National Presentation Ceremony, which was held at Gunnedah on Friday 30th August, the town from where Dorothea MacKellar drew much of the inspiration for her iconic verse.

The judges this year expressed their amazement at the standard of work submitted, which both delighted them and made the task of selecting a winner for each category that much more difficult.

Entrants were given the option of writing to a theme, ‘Wherever the Wind Blows’ or on any topic they wanted. As a result there was a vast array of topics and forms submitted for judging.

Author Sally Murphy, a well-known figure in children’s literature and judge of the secondary schools category said, “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.”

Judge of the primary section Glenda Millard, who returned for a second time this year, was equally impressed

“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,

Learning Assistance and Special Education Primary Category WINNER

Alpay Filizkok, 12
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.



highly rhymed and structured forms and free verse and experimental.

“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.

**Upper Primary Category
WINNER**

Jarrold HOY, 11
Curl Curl North Public School
North Curl Curl NSW

Letters and Numbers (excerpt)

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.



**Junior Secondary Category
WINNER**

Elisabeth SULICH, 12
SCEGGS Darlinghurst
Darlinghurst NSW

Where Poppies Grow (excerpt)

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



**Learning Assistance and Special Education Secondary
Category Learning assisted
WINNER**

Benjamin GIBSON, 17
Redeemer Baptist School
North Parramatta NSW

Salute To The Fallen (excerpt)

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.



**Lower Primary Category
WINNER**

Josiah MAY, 9
Knox Grammar Preparatory School
Wahroonga NSW

Images of Australia (excerpt)

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...





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Senior Secondary Category**WINNER**

Jobelle ROSCAS, 16

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.

a kiss on the cheek which make these real people rather than simply numbers."

As an indication of the breadth of topics and variance of form of the poems submitted, Alpay Filizkok's 'Bees' which won the Learning Assistance and Special Education Primary Category, captured its subject in a perfectly-formed seven lines.

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

Prizewinners in recent years have been presented with individual mementoes, designed and crafted by members of Gunnedah's art community. This year's trophy is a linocut 'Blowing in the Wind' by Gunnedah artist Anne Pickett who works in ceramics, watercolours, pencil and printmaking.

The awards' overarching mission is to propagate poetry in schools and the resources for teachers on the website offers some invaluable advice from some of our best authors in how to approach the writing and teaching of poetry, see <http://www.dorothea.com.au/resources.php>

This year's winners

Senior Secondary – Jobelle Roscas Tas

Junior Secondary – Elisabeth Sulich NSW

Learning Assistance and Special Education,

Secondary – Benjamin Gibson, NSW

Upper Primary – Jarrod Hoy NSW

Lower Primary – Josiah May NSW

Learning Assistance And Special Education,

Primary – Alpay Filizkok NSW

Community Relations Commission (NSW)

Award – Mele Fifita NSW

The Sheelah Baxter Award For Primary Schools

Oxford Falls Grammar, Oxford Falls NSW

Schools' Award, Secondary

Youth Education Centre Cavan SA

This year's runners up:

Senior Secondary – Rani Jayasekera Vic

Junior Secondary – Simone Engele Vic

Learning Assistance And Special Education,

Secondary – Theophilus Din NSW

Upper Primary – Prajusha Mukhopadhaya

NSW

Lower Primary – Elaine Hansen ACT

Learning Assistance And Special Education,

Primary – Snigdha Singh NSW

Schools' Award, commendations

Saturday School of Community Languages,

Smiths Hill High School Keiraville NSW

MLC Burwood NSW

Hornsby Girls' 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



"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," she said.

A stirring piece on the Hiroshima bombing from Jobelle Roscas took out the Senior Secondary prize and is a good example of

the evocative, sensitive work submitted. It is powerful stuff, on which the judges commented, "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