



JUGIONG WRITERS' FESTIVAL

CATHERINE BRAGG POETRY AWARDS

winning entries below

YEARS 3 to 6

Sophie Graham Together we are Bringing it to Light St Patricks Gundagai, NSW

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Tahlira Rose	Step	St Patricks Gundagai, NSW
Amelia Elphick	In the Night	Jugiong Primary School
Locky Eccleston	Bringing it to Light	St Patricks Gundagai, NSW

YEARS 7 TO 9

Skye Weddell Into the Light Brighton, VIC

YEARS 10 TO 12

Isabella Clacherty The Dingo Lingo Ferny Grove State High School, QLD

ADULT OPEN

Amelia Marshall ED Junee, NSW

ADULT LOCAL

Richard White Sacred Place Cootamundra, NSW

CHAMPION CATHERINE BRAGG POETRY AWARD - SOPHIE GRAHAM

SHORT STORIES AWARDS

winning entries below

YEARS 3 TO 6

Lucinda Shields Patience Cootamundra Sacred Heart Central School, NSW

YEARS 7 TO 9

Isabella Carr Corner Cootamundra High School, NSW

YEARS 10 TO 12

Maddison Teys Paddock Daisies Murrumburrah High School, NSW

ADULT LOCAL

Joselyn Freeman Tracing lines through country Cootamundra NSW

ADULT OPEN

Ian Stewart Two for the Price of One Brucedale NSW

CHAMPION SHORT STORY AWARD - IAN STEWART

CATHERINE BRAGG POETRY AWARDS

YEARS 3 to 6 and CHAMPION POEM

Sophie Graham

Together we are Bringing it to Light

I'm dreaming in the darkness,
Cowering in the spotlight,
I don't know how to create something special,

Bring yourself to Light.

I'm scared to share the power,
Afraid to lead something new,
I'm threatened by judgement,

Bring yourself to Light.

I'm fading in the background,
Frightened to fly,
I'm dreaming in the shadows instead of showing it to all,

Bring yourself to Light.

I'm letting my wild self free,
Defying all the rules,
I'm helping us unite,

You've brought yourself to Light.

I'm letting my true colours show,
Creating something new,
I'm flying higher than the clouds,

You've brought yourself to Light.

I'm guiding us the way,
Picking us up when we fall,
I'm making a better tomorrow,

You've brought yourself to Light.

Embrace your talent and shine.
We all have it within.

Together we are Bringing it to Light.

YEARS 7 TO 9

Skye Weddell

Into the Light

The dawn, soft and heavy, my boots warm.
And I breathe in the memories this place holds.
And we walk and walk and walk and I touch my heart.
And then we run, because we want to catch the sun and we watch it wash over the fields of
wheat and rusty tanks and poke its head through the hole in the tree.
And it smiles, comforting and beautiful, and I know that Gran is wherever go.

We write to the orange crest of the morning,
To the thrush that calls out,
And we look eastwards towards the rising sun.
And we felt grateful.
Because we had someone in our lives,
Who made the best cups of tea.

Who would dress up in costumes,
And rub your back.
Someone who made us feel safe,
And special,
And who let us lick the bowl.

And we still have her.
Because into the light she dances,
Into the song of each day,
Into the warmth of each night,
And into what we now create.

YEARS 10 TO 12

Isabella Clacherty

The Dingo Lingo

Draft:

There once was a dingo named Sherly and she got hit by a car.
The lizard saw and lizard said oh no Sherly she's not dead.
The emu came oh so ashamed, he pushed her in front of that car.
Tourist lurked, it seemed so berserk, but Sherly got hit by the moped.
The lizard gasped, Minecraft! Because his brain was left at the bar.
Haven't you heard the lingo? That damn dingo, was as fried as lead.
But she led you on cause there was nothing left.
All that's left is right.

The emu came still filled with shame, looking at what was left.
Sleep tight, cause tonight, she'll be right.
Cause all that's left is right.

Final:

Once upon a time there was a wild dog named Shirley who was hit by a car.
The lizard saw it and said: Shirley is not dead yet.
Mu was very embarrassed and pushed her to the car.
Although the tourists were following and looking very wild, Shirley was attacked by a moped.
The lizard is great, "Minecraft"! Because his brain stays in the bar.
You've heard the words of this ghost stray dog being blown up like lead.
But she guided you because there is nothing left.
Durability is good.

When Mu saw what was left, he still felt embarrassed.
Get a good night's sleep, because tonight you will be right.
Everything else is correct. \

ADULT OPEN

Amelia Marshall

ED

Hands
Underneath me
In my skin
Sounds
That I can't stop
Talking
I keep talking
Facts are dragged from my mouth
9 weeks
It was brown
Now it's red

It is never dark in here
The lights are always on
They can see me
All of them
Every time I cry
I am leaning on my husband
Like a child
Like a child
I am scared
And want to leave

I am yelling out in pain
They are standing over me
Now they are not looking at me
They are looking at my body
Bleeding all over the bed
They are staring at my body
While I cry
He says you need to relax
He says I haven't got it all yet
I am stretched behind a thin curtain
With my husband on the other side

Sorry
The maternity nurse says sorry
We stand in the elevator silently
There are not so many lights
But I can no longer cry

ADULT LOCAL

Richard White

A Sacred Place

Yesterday the chapel at the crematorium was a sacred place. There were no signs, no hints of the holy. There was only a box on a mount, simple and stark. There were people in tears, arms draped over shoulders and an air of bewilderment, a blank emptiness where life once had been, an ache and a longing, bereft, hollowed out and wordless moments when approaching the coffin, reverent, tender and tearful.

SHORT STORY AWARDS

YEARS 3 TO 6

Lucinda Shields

Patience

Water drips heavily off the leaves as my boots make a loud crunching noise against the gravel path. I can hear birds chirping happily, and insects buzzing, as the smell of damp socks creeps up my nose. Mist covers the sky like a blanket.

My backpack feels heavier than a car, weighing me down, as I trail through the rainforest. I stop every now and then, snapping photos of various leaves or rock, scribbling notes in my notebook. We've been exploring the Amazon for five days straight with little sleep. I have deep purple bags under my eyes, which look out of place on my pale skin. My finger nails are broken and short, and my thick, brown hair is even knottier than usual. I'm 22, and reasonably tall, but being surrounded by trees that can be 175 feet tall is making me feel tiny. So far we hadn't found anything too interesting. I imagine if today would be the day.

"You're not going to find anything Gillian," Sam, my partner, growls. "We've been out here for days looking for this 'imaginary animal'."

"Shut up," I mutter frustratedly, fiddling with my camera knob. Sam is always trying to shoot me down.

The only noise filling the gaps between our silence is the wind whistling in the distance.

Two more agonising silent hours passed before anyone said anything.

"I'm heading back to campus," Sam decides out loud. He picks up his bag, and storms back the way we came.

I press my lips and march down through the trees with extra determination. I breathe heavily with anger, and my head is buzzing with exasperation. Suddenly, I see some movement in the trees. I freeze, petrified, and hold my breath. Another rustle in the leaves, and slower than I've ever moved before I reach for my camera. Creeping like a tiger hunting its prey, I move slowly through leaves, clutching my camera to my chest for dear life. I swallow, and part the wall of leaves with my left hand.

My eyes practically bulge out of my head, and I freeze completely. There, grazing peacefully in the clearing, was the pinnacle of my research. The White Deer. It stood majestically, its coat as white as paper. Its antlers stood tall above its head. I take a quiet, almost inaudible step forward, and raise my camera. My saliva feels thick in my mouth. I take photos from every angle, in awe of such an incredible creature.

Water drips off the leaves as my boots make a crunching noise against the gravel path. I can hear birds chirping, and insects buzzing, as the smell of damp socks creeps up my nose. Mist covers the sky like a blanket. I skip down the gravel, in the rain. My brown hair is plastered to my head, and a smile is spread across my face. My boots grip the path and I break into a run. I had done it. My research was complete. I was bringing it to light.

YEARS 7 TO 9

Isabella Carr

The Corner

I jolt awake. The cold air stings my skin. The hairs on my arms and legs stand up on end. My big toe pokes through the hole in the right corner of my sleeping bag. As another gust of frozen air whips through the alley, I hug my knees to my chest. I roll onto my side and stare at the big, green garbage bin. My eyes follow the snail trails that lead up the brick wall, so high that I can no longer see the silvery glisten in the light of the rising sun. I close my eyes and attempt to go back to sleep, but it's impossible after the dream that I just had. The dream that I've been having ever since it happened.

The town bell rings seven times, announcing that it is seven o'clock. As much as I don't want to, I climb out of the warmth and enter what feels like Antarctica. The goosebumps form immediately. I roll up my sleeping bag just like Marley taught me. I tuck it behind the big green garbage bin for safe keeping. I walk towards the entrance; my brain once again is washed over by 'what ifs'. 'What if it happens to me?' 'What if they find me?' 'What if, what if?'

Despite the 'what ifs', I continue out of the safety of the alley and into the vast, dangerous world. The street isn't busy yet, just a few elderly couples out for their morning walk. Every morning I visit the food places, and either beg or go through their rubbish. I normally manage to scavenge a few bruised apples or half eaten sandwiches, but other days I get shooed away as if I'm a rodent carrying a deadly disease.

I turn right at the corner that is too familiar for my liking. My chest tightens, making it hard to breathe as flashbacks replay in my mind. I can still see it. It's been four months and I can still see it. It's as if the moment has been etched into my brain, making it impossible to forget. The air is heavy with thick fog and the horrible smell of cigarettes, making my nostrils flare. The memories and flashbacks begin to fade once I have rounded the corner.

My eyes skim the park for the shade of the gumtree. The shadow is dark and monstrous, but it makes me feel safe. The dark and gloomy shadows hide me away from the predators that could be lurking in plain daylight. I sit down in a small hollow made by the knots of the roots and glance down at what I'd foraged from the bins I had searched through. A half-eaten packet of sultanas and the crust of a sandwich. It's not much, but it's better than having an empty stomach.

Once I've eaten the discarded food, I watch a family playing frisbee. They have what I long for; a family. Dad, Mum and a sister. Their family looks so happy, throwing the disc back and forth between the four of them. The man has short brown hair and a caring smile. The lady has long blonde hair and wrinkles that look like those of a mother. There are two girls, identical, with long blonde hair like their mother and their fathers smile. They even have a dog. A brown and white border collie; he's having the time of his life chasing after a flying disc, big smile, tongue lolling. The revolving frisbee throwing makes my eyelids heavy, and I slowly drift to sleep.

We are in the hospital waiting room, praying and hoping for the best. I get up to go to the restroom. I stop and look through the window. Mum is lying there. Motionless. She must sense someone standing there because she motions for me to enter her room. Shakily I take a seat in

the chair at her bedside. She takes my hand in hers, lifts it towards her lips and kisses it softly. Tears stream down my face but she tells me it's ok. "Ruby, I need you to take care of your Dad and your sister ok?" She weakly turns her head to face me. I nod, then the monitor starts beeping and her head drops back into the pillow. I scream, nurses run in with their stethoscopes and everything goes fuzzy.

Everyone is dressed in black. We stand around two graves as the old man talks about my Mum and Dad, how they lived life to the fullest. I nudge Marley, "Wanna get out of here?" She nods. We run, as fast as we have ever run before. I glance behind us and the foster agent is running after us. We get to the main street and turn down a dark alley. We look around for a good hiding place, Marley pulls me behind a big green garbage bin. I hear hurried footsteps get louder and then fade as the foster agent runs past the alley. I turn to Marley and smile. Everything goes fuzzy again.

The corner comes into view. Marley and I are going to scavenge for food. We round the corner and there is an old man with bloodshot eyes standing, watching, waiting. He grabs Marley's arm and she screams. I try to push him away but he kicks my leg and I fall to the ground. The creep hurries Marley into the car as I try to recover, but once I'm back up the blue Land Cruiser is gone.

I jolt awake. The evening air whips my knotted hair across my face. It was my fault. I was meant to protect her, now she's gone. I run, run faster than when we were running away from the foster agent. I make it to the bridge that shadows the murky river and lean over the edge. This is it. I will be with Mum, Dad and Marley once more. I take one last breath and jump.

YEARS 10 TO 12

Maddison Teys

Paddock daisies

I'm stuck completely in my tracks, my mouth can't move, or maybe it just doesn't want to. Danger. I can see danger. I know what's going to happen. I'm not stopping it. I want to scream; I want to shout. I can't. The job has to be done.

Tell him to go!

Get out of there!

My mind screams but my body is constraining it.

A foot smashes against his crippled body with enough force to break bone. Once, twice over and over. I hear cracks then a horrendous sound escapes from his mouth; it pierces my soul, casting his pain onto me. He sprints away trying to escape, I just walk. Calm, collected, unaware of what I've just done.

Picking up his dying body a wave of guilt flushes over me. His heartbeat gets slower and slower. Breaths short and faint. They fall out of sync before finally stopping. Tears fall from my eyes, drowning me in guilt. All is lost, I am lost.

Placing the body on the back seat, the softest towel drapes over him with his head poking out, as if he's just sleeping. Right. Flinging myself into the front, a glimpse of the face in the mirror catches my eye. The pure peace on the face is breathtaking. The stillness of the body mesmerises me. The sense of no pain brings me bittersweet joy. The absence of noise fills me with a calming sense of salvation. But at the same time I feel like I've been pelted with rocks, ripping apart my face, my heart and soul. So I turn the mirror around. Out of sight out of mind.

Speeding down the highway the car starts to rip away at the gravel, I feel like I'm floating as my car rolls down the hills, dust fills the cabin through the rolled down window.

You did the wrong thing! You killed him! It's all your fault!

These words roll over and over in my head, like a storm at sea.

"I Helped him!" the only words I can verbalise.

What do I believe?

Who do I believe?

The pain isn't there anymore. It was the right thing to do. I saved him.

The brakes slam down making gashes in the soft dirt. The makeshift outback graveyard has an uncanny feeling. The tree bordered by rocks and the skulls of rotting animals, inside one tree is the key for ridding the problem before me. A shovel. I take it out and carry it to the only untouched patch of red dirt. *This spot will be perfect. It will finish my collection.* I tell myself. The shovel slams into the ground barely cracking the dried dirt. Strike after strike the shovel slowly breaks through into the soft dirt underneath. Six feet under he'll go.

Wiping the sweat off my brow I'm done. The hole is perfect and ready for someone to move in. Forever....

Unwrapping the body, he still looks as peaceful as ever. It hasn't even been an hour. His body cold and stiff. Walking with him sprawled in my arms, his head flops side to side with each and every movement I take, my arms starting to buckle as I get closer to his place of endless sleep. His body hits the dirt with the sound of meat slapping on the floor. Opening a black felt lined satin bag, I place a handwritten letter and a few paddock daisies in the bag. Next the body. Picking it up, clearing his face of dirt. The eyes have now been frosted over, like a closed shop. Dried blood around his mouth starts to flake off on my hands. I know it's time to let go. Laying him into the bag and tying it closed the same wave of guilt washes over me. He deserved this that's all I know. Rolling the bag across the ground it falls down into the grave. The afternoon sun shining into the hole lights the curves of the bag which perfectly encases the body.

The shovel helps layer the dirt on top of the bag burying him, but also burying my regret for doing this.

Packing the dirt around him, there's only one last thing left to do, find myself another graveyard for the rest of them.

Climbing back into the car a sense of calmness falls over my mind. Knowing that all is done for today I head home. Always along the backroads I travel no matter what it is, no matter if i'm just driving around, no matter if I actually need to travel the highways. It's safer.

Brrrrrring....brrrrrring.....

My work phone interrupts the trance the music has put me in. Pulling up the screen the name glows in big bold letters lighting up the dark car. OFFICER ANDREW. My body fills with anxiety about to boil over.

"Hello?" I answer hearing my voice shake with fear.

"Hello chief, I'm sorry to call you on a day off but we've found something... are you ok you sound stressed?" his voice is quickly paced. Most of the words slur together making it hard to hear.

"Of course I'm fine!" I snap back. "Sorry officer, what have you found?" I apologize after noting the anger in my voice.

"We've found a truck..." his voice grows quieter towards the end of the sentence. The word truck makes my hands start to shake and sweat pools in my waistband.

"I can't hear you, officer please speak up!" my anxiety spills over turning into anger.

"We found a truck. In the lane. Filled with bodies. All the missing people are here, all of them." The intrigue and excitement in his voice makes my stomach turn.

"Really?... I'll be there." I quickly reply

"Don't you need the location chief?" a hint of interrogation in his voice.

"Yes, I thought you would've been smart enough to know that!" the anger in my voice echoes through the phone only to be met with the hang up tone.

Turning the car around I guess it's time to go see how well the jumpsuit and gloves worked.

ADULT LOCAL

Joselyn Freeman

Tracing lines through country.

She had raced for the train to only just make it. Checking she had her ticket, she collapsed in her seat and took a deep breath. This was going to be a long journey – but hopefully a good one. The nerves jangled her a bit – but with another deep breath she tried to slow down and look out the window. Coogee to Coota, a first time for everything. She smiled to herself.

The ticket conductor caught her unawares. She looked up and realised he was staring at her. “Where you off too!” he boomed. He had his hand stretched out waiting for her ticket. She stumbled over her words. “Cootamundra” she replied, and fumbled for her ticket. He snapped it from her hands, gave it a sharp peruse, checked her student status, returned it dismissively – and moved forward.

Suddenly the train began to shunter, almost knocking the conductor forward with the shock jolt of the engine. It knocked her too, bringing her forward in her seat and her nerves began to flutter again. Was she doing the right thing? She had never been to Coota before and she was going on her own. What was it like she wondered as she stared out the window across the Redfern rail yards and into the morning light.

She took another deep breath. Although she wanted to, she knew she couldn’t drive ... not that distance ... not to see her mother whom she had never met. That was why as the dawn rose, bringing everything to light in the cold morning breeze, she stood at Coogee Bay, staring at the ocean, the vastness somehow, threatening to swallow her up - and waited for the Central Railway bus.

The ache in her belly was rising again ... but she felt a certain resolve ... she was ready and she knew this was her next step. How could she ever forget that day, when the words slipped from her father’s lips: “You’re partly hers”, as casually as the sunset falls, leaving her empty with any knowledge or understanding, or anyway to grasp, the reality of the situation.

She’d tried to block what he was saying, denying it could be true – but then he told her the whole story. Her biological mother was an egg donor. They had never been able to have kids and after many years, decided to give a donated egg a try. “But you are our baby. You’re our one and only!” He came over to give her a cuddle but she shook her shoulders free from his arms and stepped away.

She felt betrayed. She couldn’t handle how he crawled. He was her dad and she had a mum. Why now? Why when she was just getting her own shit together. An uncomfortable thought crept into her mind. What would her bio mum be like? She had no answers. It wasn’t like it came up in conversation at the pub with friends. Everyone knew who they were and where they came from right? She’d always grown up in Coogee, joined little nippers, hung out at the club. It was where she’d made herself and was identified, where she belonged. She was the bomb lifesaver. Now she felt like flotsam and jetsam – loose, disconnected, wondering where this current was taking her. She felt pulled under and began to breathe fast again.

The train steadied her with its rhythmic movement along the line. Somehow, she’d fallen asleep. It was a fitful dream of half human creatures coming for her, shadows tall and menacing flickering as she drifted between the day and her own internal reckonings. Was she doing the right thing?

At Harding her stomach felt so stretched she thought she was going to throw up the lunch she had ordered – a soggy sandwich with tepid instant coffee. She smiled ruefully to herself as she thought about all the train journey’s she’d taken through Europe. Baguette and cheese in France, salami and crusty bread in Italy, a stodgy beef pie in the UK - and who could forget the Maccas on the fast train to Paris. She’d travelled and done so much ... and now a reckoning. She wanted to see what her bio mum looked like, what she sounded like. It was like viewing a parallel world. What would she have turned out like if she’d grown up in Coota? She might have a love of the

land and the wide, swift paced rivers that ran through the country. A fresh water girl! Salt ran through her veins - but the tall gums and river reds she'd seen as she'd driven with friends from Sydney to Melbourne, were pretty breathtaking too. She remembered Gundagai by the river and how they'd joined arms to circle a great river red. Four of them had struggled as they looked through the great branches, the leafy folds, into that wide blue sky – and she had felt a kind of connection, somehow, to that place and time.

Cootamundra. She took a deep breath, steadied her legs as she stood to grab her backpack. The train moved slowly to a halt and she alighted onto the cool, wide platform, perusing for signs of familiarity. There was no one there. Only an elegantly dressed older couple. Her stomach churned again. She went to walk past but the woman raised her hand. “You from Coogee?” she inquired. I nodded numbly yes. There was something in her eyes as she looked at me again. They twinkled in the light and sparkled with a depth, a knowing – and it made her feel alarmed. “It's OK, she said. We've been waiting for this for a long time. You better come with us. We have a lot to catch up on,” she said. She touched my arm gently and began to move towards the entrance of the station. I followed blindly along, checking my mobile, my security to the world - and wondered if I was still connected.

ADULT OPEN and CHAMPION SHORT STORY

Ian Stewart

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

The chapel at the Bendemeer Funeral Home held a large contingent of silent people. But, at the back of the room, under the large stained-glass window, sat a different group. They were young, gaily dressed and just a little noisy. They drew glances of disapproval from the sombre ones towards the front. You could have cut the atmosphere with a knife.

Seated between his two best friends in the front row was Angus, the deceased's only child. He sat silently, his dark suit appropriate for the moment. But there was something unusual in his dress. He wore a white tie and had a carnation in his buttonhole.

The organist set a funereal tone. At the stroke of ten the celebrant stood. 'Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming today to celebrate the life of Constance McPherson ...' She continued her spiel until its customary conclusion. 'Abide with Me' was sung.

The coffin began to make its majestic journey over the rollers towards a pair of oak doors, which silently opened. It passed through, out of sight.

The celebrant cleared her throat. 'It is a little unusual to wait until the passage of the coffin before the eulogy is given. But we are parting from tradition. I now ask Constance's son to say a few words.

Angus stood and made his way to the lectern.

'Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for coming to see my mother off. I plan to dispense with the usual rundown of the deceased's life. You know most of that anyway and are well aware of her niggardliness. There is one aspect of that characteristic I want to talk about and it concerns her will. You are know that I am single. If I had married before she died her whole estate would pass on to the company. I would remain as general manager but the twenty million dollars would not come to me. Now that she's gone I plan to redress my unmarried state. Would you all please stand?'

With that, the rear doors of the chapel flung wide. The organist began to play upbeat music and the group of rowdies at the rear began to cheer. Then the music changed to Wagner's 'Bridal Chorus' and a radiant Sally Thompson, adorned in shining white silk, began her stately progress down the aisle on the arm of her father.