

Coffs Harbour Writers' Group



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Affiliated with the Northern Rivers Writers Centre

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PO Box 1953, Coffs Harbour 2450 www.coffsharbourwriters.com



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Greetings

It continues to be festival time of year for writers along the North Coast with so many fabulous opportunities to hear established and up and coming writers. We have previously reported on the very successful Dorrigo weekend. A stimulating follow on was the inaugural Yamba Writers' Festival held over the 31 May/1 June weekend. The rain poured down, the sea was shrouded in mist, but the writers devoured the entertaining anecdotes from authors such as award-winning West Australian, Robert Drewe, Iluka local, Zacharey Jane and acclaimed memoir writer, Kristina Olssen. The June long weekend will see the Bellingen Festival in action – a good range of workshops, talks and performances this year. The main drawcard is Alex Miller but there are lots of other interesting speakers and a strong indigenous presence. You can buy one or two day passes or just by session from the Information Centre near the Bellingen Library. *Leonie*

What's on in June?

5 June 2014 Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Monthly Meeting 10.30 am - 12.30 pm
Coffs Ex Services Club.

7 – 9 June 2014 Bellingen Readers and Writers' Festival.

19 June 2014 Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Social Meeting 10.00 am – 12 noon,
Sawtell Nursery JJs Café, Hogbin Drive near the Sawtell Fire Station.

And coming up soon:

10 July 2014 Writers' Evening Workshop 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm Pitching your Synopsis.
Facilitated by Leonie Henschke. Coffs Harbour Library. Bookings Karolyn 0423538506

17 July 2014 Writers' Group Christmas in July function. More details soon.

1 – 3 August 2014 Byron Bay Writers' Festival Featuring more than 100 authors. The program includes some of Australia's best writers and thinkers from Malcolm Fraser, Clare Wright, Julian Burnside and Tim Flannery to Ashley Hay, Alex Miller, Andy Griffiths and many more. See the website www.byronbaywritersfestival.com.au

From the President...

Dear Members, As a follow up from the guest speaker session we had on 'Social Media and Blogging for Promotion' at our meeting on 1 May with Liz Keen, ABC Open Mid North Coast, I am currently in discussion with ETC to deliver a how-to '**Social Media Essentials for Writers Workshop**' in August, date to be confirmed, venue ETC, and time 10 am to 12 noon. This will be a free workshop as part of the Coffs Digital Enterprise Program and it will be restricted to CHWG members only. *Lorraine*

Members write...

Ronald Marke

Lonely

The old man wanders through the country, slowly observing the surroundings. He sits on a stone wall. Silence pervades.

He reflects on the past, imagines the future and worries. His gun is leaning against the wall. He looks around, not feeling positive, slightly depressed, pondering.

"Why am I here? What will happen to me? Where am I going? What does the future hold for me?" He looks at his gun, then stares into the blue sky. Perhaps I ought to be more positive and helpful to other people. But I have no one to turn to. I fear no one will listen to me if I do try to explain my situation."

An elderly lady approaches, then stops. "Good morning. Have you been hunting?"

“No, I haven't. I'm just thinking about myself.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I'd like to explain something to you if you don't mind listening.”

The lady looks surprised. The man notices her reaction. He tries to say something but could not find the right words to describe his feelings.

“Oh, forget it. I've forgotten what I was going to say.”

The lady walks away, leaving the old man staring at his gun.

“I can't help myself. I've been a complete failure practically all my life. I lack confidence. Is life worth living?” He stares into the sky, then looks at his gun, hesitating. He takes a deep breath, stands up, picks up his gun and slowly walks along the path. He gradually disappears among the trees.

Roger Harris

Excerpt from The Jackal was a Jackass

I'm going to like it here. I raise my hand in acknowledgement to the removal guys as the truck disappears around the corner. After all, they're finished the move on time and there doesn't appear to be any damage, though I've a lot of unpacking to do yet. I spin around and head back up the drive; no, wait, let's just take it in, this is a nice house, might even be a bit big for a bachelor.

A glancing survey of the surrounding houses tells me I've done OK, manicured lawns and gardens, well presented houses, I have no idea who my neighbours are yet, probably retired stock brokers, maybe the odd judge, kids at university or married, the obedient but boring wife, the normal sort of upper class suburban boredom. A long way from the pokey terraces of Herne Hill as a child.

Which brings me to a point, neighbours tend to be nosy, so I better figure out a good story when the first one asks “and what did you do for a living, Mr Harris?” “If I told you I'd have to kill you”. I might get away with that as a joke the first few times, but you're going to get pinned down eventually and I can hardly give a truthful answer because then I would have to kill you. You see I'm a retired assassin.

Karolyn Gibson

My latest ABC Open workshop, with Producer Liz Keen, was with some of the members of Coffs Harbour Writers' Group in March/April this year. She encouraged us to unravel a part of history.

We were to choose an object that had a personal connection and write the story identifying our own feelings while expressing the voice that echoed through the shadows of

our chosen objects' history. My thoughts and indeed the story I chose to share with ABC Open was created from memories my mother would share with me...A poetic description of a time when she was young.

I thank ABC Open for this opportunity as my mother now settles quietly in my own memory, Thank you, Mum. Thank you, ABC Open.

Writing tips!

1. Try not to edit while you're creating your first draft. Creating and editing are two separate processes using different sides of the brain, and if you try doing both at once you'll lose. Make a deal with your internal editor that it will get the chance to rip your piece to shreds; it will just need to wait some time.
2. Write daily for 30 minutes minimum! It's easy to notice the difference in a short time. Suddenly, ideas come to you and you think of other things to write. You experiment with styles and voices and words and the language becomes more familiar.
3. Be a good reader first.
4. Learn to take criticism and seek feedback at every opportunity. Don't get upset even if you think the criticism is harsh, don't be offended even if you think it's wrong, and always thank those who take the time to offer it.
5. After editing the work on screen or in print, read the text aloud. Awkward sentences and errors that slipped through earlier edits will now show up readily. This is especially true for poetry which needs to be read out loud to check rhythm.

Information round-up

Henry Handel Richardson Writing Competition 2014. Closing date: 31 July 2014. Judge: Helen Garner. Up to 5000 words. First Prize: \$1500; Second: \$500; Third: \$250. Prize winners also receive books from the sponsors, Text Publishing. Further information including guidelines and entry form at www.henryhandelrichardsonsociety.org.au

Odyssey House Victoria 4th Annual Short Story Competition. This competition is open to writers of all ages and experience. Each submission must be no more than 1,500 words and follow the theme 'Denial'. It will need to make a reference to alcohol and/or drugs. There is a limit of three entries per person, and the entry fee is \$10 per story. **First prize is \$1,000** and a one year membership to Writers Victoria; **2nd prize is \$100** and **3rd prize is \$50**. The competition **closes on Friday 31 October, 2014**. For more information or to download an entry form, go to www.odyssey.org.au.

Coffs Harbour City Library. Just a reminder that the library has a huge array of resources which includes books, magazines, music CDs, DVDs and audio-books. In fact the library holds over 90,000 items! It has developed web pages to promote the resources and help customers find a great read. They remind us to check out the Book Lovers page. The Library also provides a lending service for local book clubs. The Digital Library Project also provides members with access to e-books, e-audiobooks and e-readers.

<http://libraries.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/books>

That's all for now. Don't forget, contributions please. Your own stories, book or film reviews, writing exercises... whatever takes your fancy. Leonie