

# Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Inc. *Established September 1986*

*Affiliated with the Byron Bay Writers' Festival (Northern Rivers Writers' Centre)*

*April 2017 Newsletter No 299*

PO Box 1953, Coffs Harbour 2450 [www.coffsharbourwriters.com](http://www.coffsharbourwriters.com)

**Grassroots Writers' Weekend Port Macquarie 2017,  
fabulous Writing Competition and the Monthly calendar**

## Committee Members

---

<b>President (Acting):</b>	Yvonne Kachel <a href="mailto:Yvonne.kachel@bigpond.com">Yvonne.kachel@bigpond.com</a>
<b>Secretary:</b>	Kim Shepherd <a href="mailto:akimbomakes@gmail.com">akimbomakes@gmail.com</a>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Suzanne Tainsh <a href="mailto:polyart42@gmail.com">polyart42@gmail.com</a>
<b>Membership Secretary:</b>	Estelle Russell <a href="mailto:earusse21@gmail.com">earusse21@gmail.com</a>
<b>Social Secretary/</b>	Yvonne Kachel <a href="mailto:Yvonne.kachel@bigpond.com">Yvonne.kachel@bigpond.com</a> and
<b>Newsletter Editor and Publicity:</b>	Leonie Henschke <a href="mailto:leonie@henschke.net.au">leonie@henschke.net.au</a>

---

## Greetings

It's been a creative month with the annual Grassroots Writers' Weekend hosted very ably by Port Writers in bustling Port Macquarie. Great workshops, lovely, friendly people (aren't all writers?) and inspiration from the setting, other readings and the sharing of words of wisdom and advice. If you missed this one pencil in next year for Dorrigo around the 5 May. Each location in the Grassroots network has its own flavour and orientation and all are well worth the effort and modest outlay for workshops.

At Port Macquarie we explored many aspects of writing and promotion but also looked closely at words, their use and overuse in our writings, the construction of sentences and the order of our paragraphs and chapters to engage the reader. Engaging the reader is the role of the writer whether in fiction or non-fiction. Displaying a voice and personality, either our own or our characters is the secret of keeping the reader turning the page.

There is nothing better to keep us practising these skills than a deadline. And now we have the perfect incentive – the inaugural Coffs Harbour Writers’ Group Short Story Competition. Gain fame, fortune (well...) and a chance to broadcast your work widely. Now there’s a challenge. Read more details further in the Newsletter.

*Happy writing, Leonie*

---

## **What’s on in April?**

**10.00 am - 12.30 pm Wednesday 5 April 2017 Cavanbah Centre. Coffs’s Harbour Writers’ Group Monthly meeting followed by lunch (see below).**

**12.30 pm – 1.30 pm Wednesday 5 April 2017 Writers’ Group Lunch in Chill Out café, Community Village (next to Cavanbah Centre).**

**10.00 am – 12.30 pm Thursday 20 April Coffs Harbour Writers’ Group Social Morning Hidden Link Café, Hogbin Drive, Toormina (next to Toormina/Sawtell Fire Station at former nursery)**

*And for the diary*

**9 June 2017 Bellingen Readers’ and Writers’ Festival Poetry Slam More details [bellingenwritersfestival.com.au](http://bellingenwritersfestival.com.au)**

**4 – 6 August 2017 Byron Writers Festival. More details at [byronwritersfestival.com/festival-2017/](http://byronwritersfestival.com/festival-2017/)**

---

## **President’s Report**

March has been a busy month with some highs and lows. One low was the resignation of Rhonda Rand as assistant treasurer due to personal reasons. The committee will miss Rhonda and her wise words but the good news is Rhonda will still be an active member of our group.

The Grass Roots Writers’ Festival at Port Macquarie proved to be a success with high numbers and great attendance at workshops. One workshop that was popular was our very own Rosalie Skinner’s workshop titled: ‘The Barefoot Editor - How to Turn your Pasture into Lawn’. Rosalie will be presenting the workshop for our benefit after the business meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May so make sure you put the date in your diaries.

Now, I am leaving for New Zealand on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, and Annette Arthur will be your capable Acting President during my absence. Enjoy the meeting, fellowship and lots of creative writing. And look below at our exciting initiative...

*Regards Yvonne*

## Writing tips

*We've all heard these before but do we follow them?*

- 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.
- 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...

*And what that old writing chestnut when to use lay or lie...*

### *To Lie or To Lay?*

The verbs *to lie* and *to lay* have very different meanings. Simply put, *to lie* means 'to rest', 'to assume or be situated in a horizontal position', and *to lay* means 'to put or place'. (Of course, a second verb *to lie*, means 'to deceive,' 'to pass off false information as if it were the truth', but here we are focusing on the meaning of *to lie* that gives writers the most grief.)

Here is the essential difference between these two verbs:

*To lie* is an intransitive verb: it describes an action undertaken by the subject, but it will never have a direct object. That is, the verb *to lie* does not express the kind of action that can be done to anything. Think of it as meaning 'to recline' or 'to rest'. It is conjugated in this manner:

- I *lie* here every day. (He/she/it *lies* here.)
- I *lay* here yesterday.
- I *will lie* here tomorrow.
- I *am lying* here right now.
- I *have lain* here every day for years.

Notice that we never use the verb *laid* to describe the act of reclining.

*To lay* is a transitive verb: it needs a direct object because it describes the kind of action that is done to something. That is, something or someone has to be receiving the action of the verb *to lay*. Think of this verb as meaning 'to place', 'to put': something in the sentence must be getting 'put' or 'placed'.

One reason people have trouble remembering the difference between *to lie* and *to lay* is that the past tense form of *to lie* is *lay*—spelled exactly like the present tense form of the verb *to lay*.

The two past participles also cause some confusion. Many people are not even familiar with the past participle of the verb *to lie*, which is *lain*: "We have *lain* on every mattress in the store, and now we must decide which one to purchase." Because *lain* is an unfamiliar verb form and because it sounds very similar to the past participle of *to lay*, which is *laid*, folks often use *laid* as the past participle for both verbs.

From [www.getitwriteonline.com](http://www.getitwriteonline.com)

## **Coffs Harbour Writers' Group**

### **Short Story Competition**

Here's a challenge! Time to get out those notebooks and pens, or put hands to keyboard and computer and get your ideas flowing for the inaugural *Coffs Harbour Writers Group Short Story Competition*. Tell your friends and colleagues.

Stories must be no more than 3,000 words and must include the word 'coast'. There is the opportunity to win cash prizes and have your story published on the Group's website.

With an entry fee of only \$15.00, it's a great way to practise your writing and support our Group.

Entries open 1 August, but the weeks fly by, so why not make a start now.

Keep watching the space on our website for updates on closing dates and presentation guidelines and get the muses working. The work must not have been previously published.

*Members of the Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Committee, the Competition Sub-committee, judges and their immediate families are ineligible to enter.*

*Margaret Penhall-Jones, Coordinator, Competition Sub-committee.*

### **Members write...**

#### **Roger Harris**

##### **The Come Back Kid**

There's not a lot of room to spare in a Lotus Elise at the best of times. Wearing a crash helmet and full driving suite there's even less. Can't put your head back because it's already in contact with the headrest. The roof is on for aerodynamic purposes, so I'm feeling almost claustrophobic after 32 years away.

Moving slowly forward I weave from left to right to clean the tyres up. Up to the marshalling line, to be greeted by Antoinette, who has a wonderful calming influence on me, my heart is pounding. I mentally rehearse the hill before me. The start, what I need to do, the revs I should be holding before I drop the clutch, the gentle start, get traction before using too much throttle, staying wide into the first turn to minimise the gradient change and avoid loss of traction. See the landmark I picked out this morning walking up the hill to find where to turn into turn three, because you can't see it until the last minute.

Calm myself, some hand and finger exercisers, deep breaths. Antoinette wishes me well and a safe run as she indicates to move forward to the start line. I can do a small burn out to clean and heat the rear tyres, but move gently up to the line, we go through the procedure and bring the car to a halt, focusing on the lights, the orange indicates the beam is unbroken, and I am behind the line.

It seems quiet here. Build the revs, just staring at the lights, not even blinking. Green, GO! Good traction, up to the first turn just after the initial rise, it makes it light to turn in, it skates a bit, but I'm back on the power, now up through a long sweeping uphill right-hand turn, accelerating hard, waiting to see my turn in marker for the next turn. I hate accelerating hard at things I can't see, and at 66 it's got no easier, commitment, Roger, commitment. There it is, turn for the apex, it comes into view in a rush, I'm on top of it, the two inside wheels go over it, the road drops away, the car slides, just enough room on the exit, nice.

Down through the kink, hold that throttle, the following hairpin is coming up awfully fast. Turn hard left, the car says no, I coax it, I get it into the apex, back on the power, it starts to float wide I need to keep it in, avoid the rumble strip it will upset my acceleration if run over it. Down the straight move over to the left, turning hard right the track rises, over crest, suddenly you're on-top of the first part of the chicane, miss the apex and you're in trouble, but I get the wheels on the kerb, a sharp drop, the next part hard left with negative camber, I'm a little wider than I would like, not quite where I need to be for the next part, the car skates through here, followed by two left hand turns, left too much room exiting the second one, I could carry more speed through there. Note for next time.

A quick left and right kink, flat through there, another straight, keep on the power Rog, Commitment, Commitment. Last turn carry as much speed as you dare, it's floating wide, but the finish line is here. Not much slow down room here, but back down the access road to the paddock.

That was a good run, I have an urgent appointment with the time board, clamber out of the car, take off the hat and head for the board.

Roger Harris 56.70 1st place.

I was quite emotional. It meant a lot, I've been to hell in my life, and back, this was the final hurdle, can I still drive? Yes I can. In anyone's language that was a bloody fast time.

*Roger Harris*

---

## **Some personal thoughts on why we write from Margaret Penhall-Jones**

**For therapy:** Our first writing is often for therapy. Like infants, we react. Then we write about it. We write spontaneously, maybe furiously. We often find ourselves writing in an effort to exorcise past negative events and feelings; hurt, anger or jealousy. This is an essential process but this writing is also intensely personal. Never show it to anyone (except perhaps your actual therapist if you have one). Keep it for yourself until you can read it and know you have let those feelings go. Then burn it, or if it's on computer, press 'delete'.

**For ego:** In this stage we are like adolescents. We are learning but our narcissism flares. We tell ourselves we will be better than every other writer, unless we are sure we are already better. We may misuse our emerging talent to criticise and judge. Our writing may hurt others and we rationalise that as being okay because we are ‘artists’. Yet our insights are no more than skin deep and our satire undergraduate at best. Our writing may be promising but it is flawed because it has never been tested and in some cases, will never be completed. If we progress to maturity, we will look back shame-faced at our efforts and we will understand this: *mean-spirited writing only reflects on the writer.*

**Maturity:** Eventually we become aware of the ‘other’ in the writing equation; the reader, the people we want to reach, whether our family or a wider readership. We understand that because we ask them to spend their time reading our work, they deserve respect. We have to dialogue with them as people with feelings, intelligence and experience. Our insights become understanding, our humour is coloured by compassion for the shared human condition and our writing entertains, absorbs or delights. We have matured as writers and are ready to become artists.

**So as you put fingertips to keyboard or pen to paper, ask yourself this question:**

**“Am I there yet?”** © Margaret Penhall-Jones

---

### **Competitions from Margaret Penhall-Jones** (*Click on the Competition title to follow link*)

#### **[30 April: Varuna Fellowship](#)**

A two-week residency at the National Writers' House in the Blue Mountains is on offer for regional writers. Poetry, drama, literary, and genre-based work considered. Entry fee: \$55. [Information here:](#)

#### **[1 May: Writers Unleashed Picture Book Writing Competition](#)**

Open to original picture book manuscripts up to 500 words of any theme. First prize: \$200. Entry fee: \$12. [Information here:](#)

#### **[31 May: FAWQ Literary Competition](#)**

This competition has three categories for short stories of 1500 to 2000 words, articles of 1000 words and poetry up to 40 lines. First prize for each category: \$200. Entry fee: \$5. [Information here:](#)

#### **[5 June: The Big Issue Fiction Edition Callout](#)**

*The Big Issue* are calling for stories between 300 and 3000 words of any genre. Every author published will be paid \$500 and entry is free. [Information here](#)

#### **[30 June: CHASS Book Prize](#)**

Four prizes will be awarded for distinguished achievements by Australians working, studying, or training in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences sectors, including academics, practitioners, philanthropists, policy makers, and students. First prize: \$3500, no entry fee.

#### **Reminders (closing soon!)**

#### **[13 April: Adelaide Plains Poets Poetry Competition](#)**

#### **[30 April: Outback Writers' Festival Short Story Competition](#)**

#### **[30 April: The Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation Playwriting Competition](#)**

---

*That's all for now. Don't forget, contributions please. We are a **writing group** – we meet to improve our writing and practise! Send your own stories, book or film reviews, writing exercises, please, to the Newsletter Editor. Don't wait to be asked! Leonie*