

# Unexpected Forces



Stories and poems by Forgotten Australians



Two Eels Swimming, by **Steven Martin** | Graphite & Colour Pencil on Paper, 25x13.5cm



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.....  
Stories and poems by  
Forgotten Australians\*

Change can come through re-imagining  
the past, claiming power over the stories we  
tell ourselves and inventing new ways of  
seeing these stories and ourselves.

**Stories and poems from  
'The Healing Power of Story' workshops  
for Survivors of 'Out of Home Care'**

.....  
RECONCILING HISTORIES



## Acknowledging Country

We respectfully acknowledge and pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland, traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where this project took place. We thank them for their hospitality. We acknowledge and celebrate the continuation of a living culture with story tellers and artists who continue to inspire us. We acknowledge Elders past and present as well as our emerging leaders of tomorrow.

## List of contributors

Ken Waldron	Gloria Lovely	Darryl Green	Bill Archie
Harry James	Lee Lomas	Tanya Smith	Colin Toby
Jewels Fenner	Suzie Saville	Michael Clay	Mick Butler
Michele Urwin	Marjorie Earl	Debra Wellby	Ann Corbett
Donna Marie Barlow	Robyn Ellis	Terrence Hamilton	Mary Adams
Carol Taylor	Bridgette Birda	Sandra Bennett	Susie Petersen
Lana	Carolyn Frawley	Roslyn Hamilton	Bobby Turnbull
Colin Lofgren	Michael Collins	Deborah Rose	Steven Martin
Min	Kylie Brand	Laurie Dempsey	Linda Kershaw
Barry Bourke	Jessie Morwood	Deidre Dempsey	Allan Marshall
Evie Teagle	Florrie F. F. Scanlon	Narelle Ranie	Marlene Wilson
Lynette Jones	Pierre Crowl	Trevor Hedland	Alex Temesuary
Lynette Stott	Sherryl Lofgren	Doolie	Bryan Hartas
Bobby Hodson	Brian Laing	Yvette McGinn	Colleen Stevenson
Deborah Jackson	Bob Taylor	Tracy Baker	Joe Murrins
Noel Lorenzo	Bonnie Brand	Marilyn Emblem	Randell Armitage
William Pike	Rebecca Earl	Gale Sawtell	Deslyn Franks
Trish Ambrose	Rosemary Burrows	Leslie Brown	Jacqui Bisson
Melody Frost	Jan Coleman	Patricia Robinson	Renea Strathie

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**\*Forgotten Australians** refers to more than 500,000 children who were placed into institutional or other out of home care in Australia during the last century, including Former Child Migrants. Many experienced trauma and neglect during their time in care and faced significant challenges in adult life because of this.

We acknowledge there are people who prefer different words to describe themselves and their experiences of out-of-home care.

Lotus Place is a dedicated support service and resource centre supporting this group of people in Queensland.

# Foreword

Micah Projects welcomed the opportunity to receive funding from the Qld Government Arts Queensland and Australian Government Regional Arts Fund (administered by Flying Arts Alliance); and work in partnership with The Edge, State Library Queensland and the Queensland Government's Truth Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce to bring about this publication.

Over the past thirty years we have seen so many reports, Parliamentary Inquiries, Royal Commissions, academic papers and Government policy positions in response to the failure of institutions to care and protect vulnerable children entrusted with their care. Breaking the silence and bringing to light the legacy of trauma on the lives of children as adults, alongside the abuse of power by powerful institutions has been an ongoing passion for those with the lived experience of childhoods lost as they seek pathways to healing and justice. Equally so is their passion to learn and show new skills, new understanding of the courageous journey each person embarks on.

This project in both its process of happening and the outcome of this anthology provide another account that shows the pain of the past and the beauty of resilience that comes from enabling people to have their imagination and their hearts find an expression in writing and art.

We thank and recognise the guidance and skills of Katie McGuire the Project Coordinator and Edwina Shaw the creative writing Workshop Facilitator alongside the amazing contribution and expression with the participants across Queensland. We thank and acknowledge all the support staff and volunteers of Lotus place in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville who supported this process.

Maya Angelou stated "I believe every person is born with talent. We all have our unique gifts to share with the world. Its our job to uncover and unleash them."

Projects such as this show us this truth over and over. The opportunity this funding provided has resulted in unleashing talents and unique gifts of participants so beautifully placed together in this publication.

**Karyn Walsh**  
CEO Micah Projects

# Introduction

Unexpected Forces is a selection of works that came out of ‘The Healing Power of Story’ workshops, a program of creative writing workshops in eight locations across Queensland — Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Gympie. This was part of the Reconciling Histories project supporting healing and joy for people who have a history of lived experience of institutional or out-of-home care.

It was wonderful to witness participants engage with their creativity to bring forth inspiring, captivating, surprising and often humorous stories. It was evident that people were empowered through being actively heard and that their stories were expressing the strength and value of their lives.

Throughout the day-long workshop, participants grew in confidence to share their stories with the rest of the group and created meaningful connections with each other. Even those most reluctant and anxious about participating at the outset of the workshop, were sharing their stories with others, and being applauded for their efforts within a short time. Some participants shared stories of their traumatic experiences for the first time in their lives. Others gave dramatic performances of hilarious youthful adventures that lifted the whole group and had us all laughing.

This was one of the critical aims of the project – helping people to discover that they do not have to stand alone, and that there are creative and fulfilling ways to feel less isolated. Likewise, telling and hearing these stories demonstrated a powerful way for participants to connect to their deeper sense of self and forge a new identity.

We have published ‘Unexpected Forces’ to help participating writers recollect the uplifting experience of the workshop and to serve as a reminder to focus on the tiny moments of joy in our lives as a way to begin to feel happier every day.

We hope they feel proud when they share this book with their family and friends and the broader community.

Congratulations and thank you to all the participating writers for their courage in letting their inner storyteller out to play and for helping to create a safe place for each other. It was a privilege to be part of these workshops and witness the creativity that emerged. It is my hope that having a positive experience of expressing themselves through writing will increase participants’ belief in themselves as writers so they can begin to keep journals and write other stories for self-expression and healing.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our facilitating writer Edwina Shaw for being an inspiring, supportive, and uplifting teacher and listener.

I would also like to thank all the Lotus Place and Micah staff and volunteers for their support.

This anthology will contribute to the legacy of Forgotten Australians, and those who are survivors of institutional child abuse. It serves as a testimony to their strength and resilience, imaginations, and compassionate hearts. Projects such as this continue the conversation about Forgotten Australians to raise awareness and build understanding about what happened, support insight into the life-long impacts of what they endured as children and extend our knowledge of what is supportive and helpful going forward.

**Katie McGuire**

*Project Coordinator Reconciling Histories*  
Lotus Place, Micah Projects



## Unexpected forces

by Harry James | *Gympie*

Go at it boldly  
and you'll find unexpected forces  
Closing around you,  
Coming to your aid.

After going overboard,  
In the ocean for five hours  
At night.

Exhausted, I lay on my back,  
Floated.  
Four times I stopped.  
I couldn't go on.

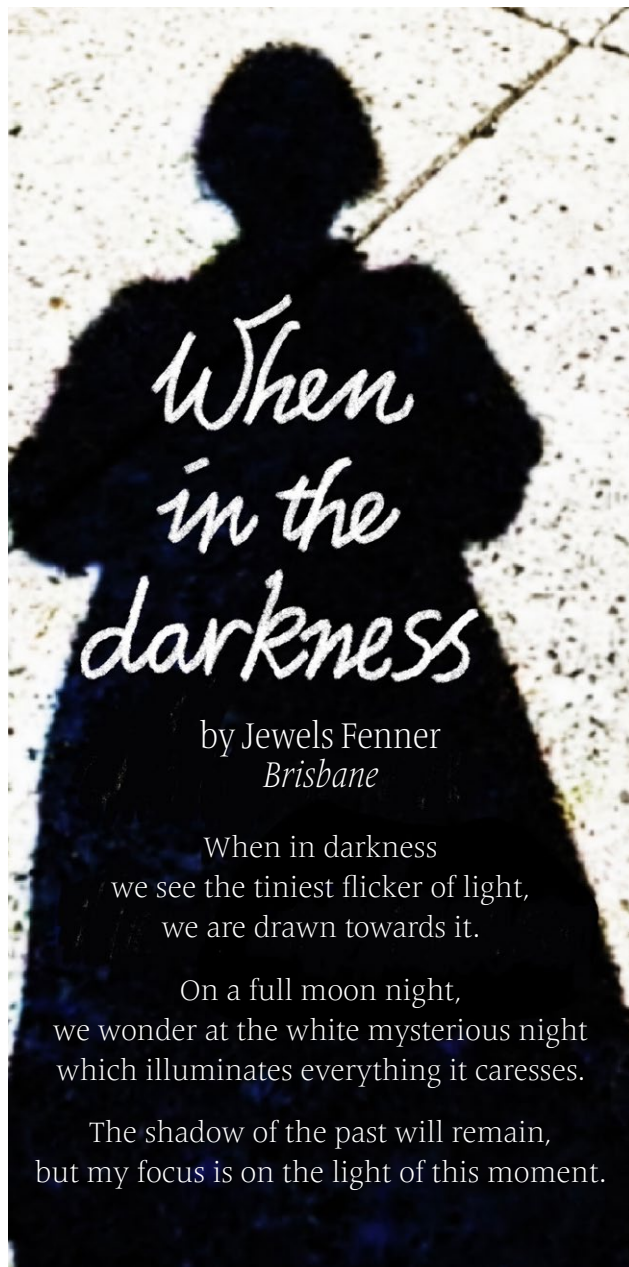
I sank down,  
Below the surface.  
Down.

But each time,  
After I dropped a metre or two,  
I said, "I want to live!"  
And kicked again,  
To the surface.

The jellyfish gathered around me,  
Everywhere in the water.

And although I was stung red raw,  
This unexpected force protected me,  
From the sharks.

*Drifting With The Current*, by **Jewels Fenner**  
Water colour on paper, 29x21cm



*Illumination*, by **Jewels Fenner** | Digital Photograph

## This reminded me of happiness

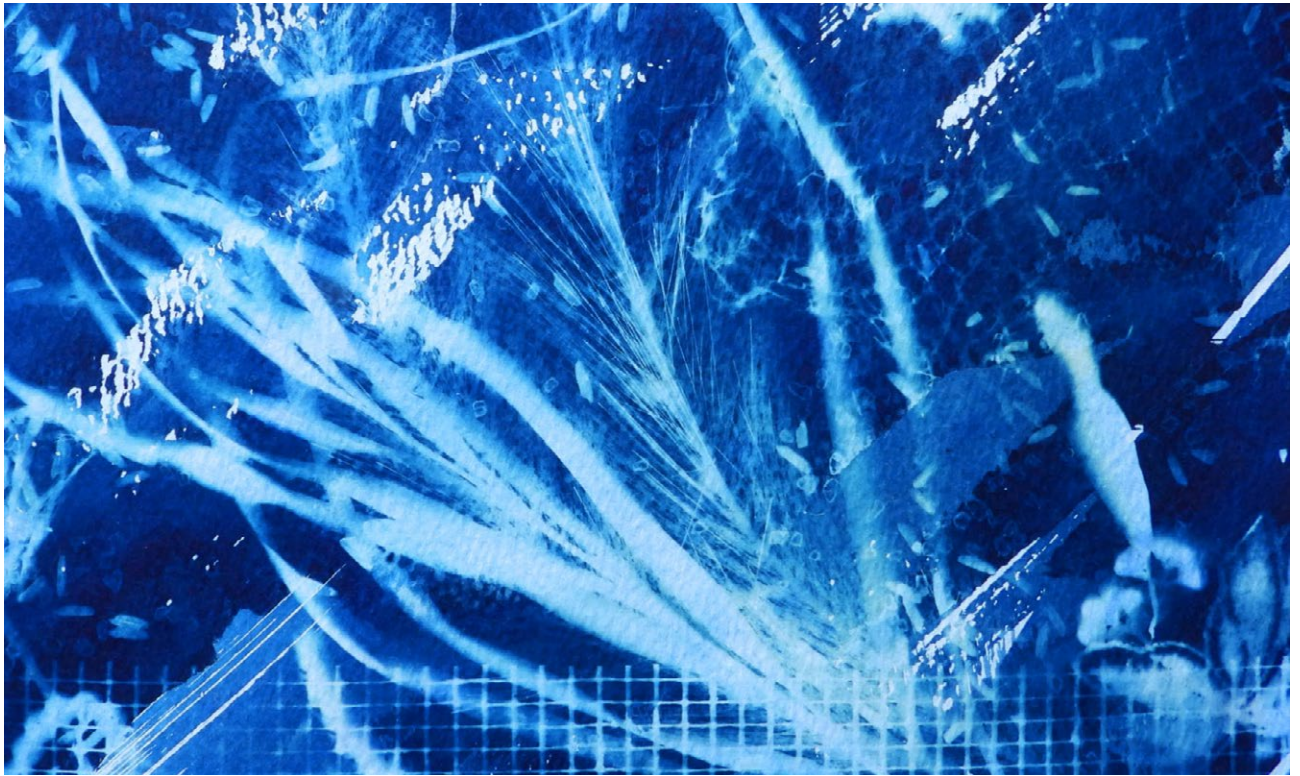
by Ken Waldron | *Brisbane*

I see myself in a room, small and cosy. I am imagining myself as a non-person, wrapped in a cocoon. I am not sure what I am. As it is dark inside, I have no feelings, and I can't hear any vibration, or sounds. The peaceful moments from this part of my life are numb.

A little later, the cocoon started to fold open, with blue and yellow colours. This reminded me of happiness.



*Cocoon*, by **Ken Waldron** | Pencil on paper, 14x20 cm



*Natures Beauty*, by **Linda Kershaw** | Cyanotype on watercolour paper, 21x29.5 cm

## The stranger

by Michele Urwin | *Brisbane*

Walking down the dim hallway, I turned  
the corner,  
Fearfully looking into the eyes of a stranger,  
A stranger?  
A reflection of me in the full-length mirror.

## Joy in small things

by Michele Urwin | *Brisbane*

I wasn't expecting this.  
A surprise, while walking the dog.  
This morning I looked down and there it was.  
Fallen two metres onto the cracked concrete  
path. My hand that wasn't holding the dog lead  
reached out and softly picked up the partially  
opened bloom – white petals hugging each  
other with a yellow heart at the centre.



*Morning sunlight*, by **Katie McGuire** | Digital Photograph

## My pram

by Carol Taylor | *Cairns*

I remember my pram. Memories are not supposed to form early in our lives, but I remember my pram. It was big and grey with huge wheels. It held my brother and me, but he was two years older and took up more space. There wasn't room for my feet when Bobby sat at the end and sometimes, he squashed my toes. I don't remember an adult pushing the pram, but someone must have. My pram was my safe place. I wonder where it went.

## Santa Claus is coming to town

Donna Marie Barlow | *Brisbane*

When I was in the orphanage, I was told we were going out to a Christmas party. Wow, I thought – a Christmas party, what's that? They said we were going to see Santa Claus. I didn't know who Santa Claus was. Was he real or not? I was nine and half years old and I'd never seen Santa.

I was excited about the party, but on the other hand, I wasn't. I didn't know what was going to happen. I found it very scary that this party was happening in my world.

We arrived at the party which was in a big hall. There were a lot of people. I was scared because I didn't know them at all. Then Jingle Bells started playing and a person in a red suit arrived. Who's he? I thought to myself. I found out it was Santa. WOW!

He started calling out our names. I didn't know what to do. Sit. Stand. Go. Run. But when my name was called, I slowly went up to him and he gave me a present, a doll like all the other girls had been given. I was very happy.

# The bride doll

by Lana | *Brisbane*

I hear cars. I hear people. I see people and hear music and laughter, excitement. I'm at the RACQ Picnic Day for children at Nudgee. I smell fresh air. I smell food cooking. I smell fairy floss, sweet and sticky. I am anxious and excited all at once. Suddenly the music stops, and everything is still.

They are calling out a number and the prize is a large bride doll in a box, wearing a wedding dress, a white one. My number is called, and the sister says I've won the bride doll. My heart is beating fast. My face lights up like a cracker as I am given this beautiful doll in a box. It's nearly as big as me. And it's mine.

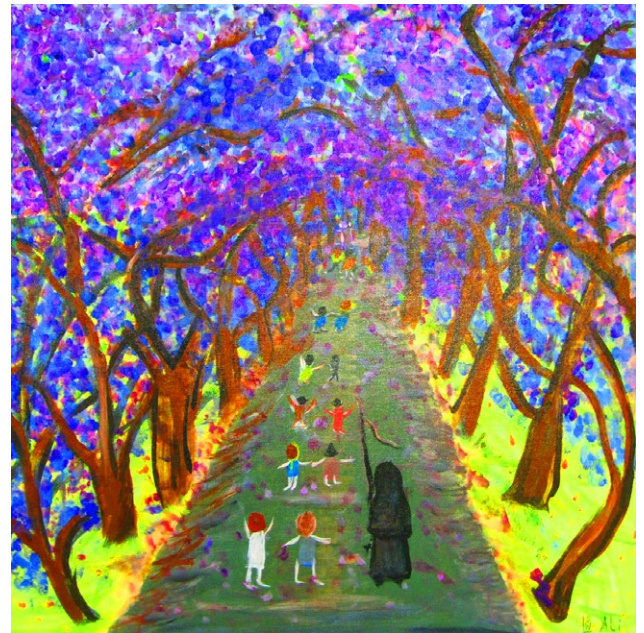
But the excitement doesn't last long. Another child is crying, and the sister gives my doll to that child. That makes me very angry and upset.

That was the end of my beautiful doll. "Give and Take," is the nun's motto, I think.

I was about five years old then. It was my first happy, and sad, moment.



Girls from Nudgee Orphanage at RACQ picnic  
courtesy of Micah Projects



St Vincents Rd - Nudgee, by **Lana** | Acrylic on Canvas, 76x76cm

## Birthday at the beach by Colin Lofgren | *Brisbane*

When I was around twelve, I was in Neerkol. It was the weekend leading up to my birthday. Some people from the Wandal district in Rockhampton came to take a group of children out – about eight of us. One of those people, Patricia, was the daughter of the family who used to take me out for Wandal day.

They took us to Emu Park, the other end of Yeppoon, a beach with golden sand. The sea was blue, crisp and clean, and across the water we could see Great Keppel Island. It was a sunny autumn day, still quite warm in April. Not too hot, just comfortable.

They took us all down to Emu Park and to my surprise they celebrated my birthday a bit early. It had never really been celebrated at Neerkol. But this day they made a little picnic for us all. Patricia came out with a present and I didn't know who it was for.

It was for me!

A proper dartboard. At first, I was a bit puzzled, because I'd never played darts. The closest I'd come was the quoit board at my grandma's. I never was any damned good. I kept getting beaten by my sisters all the time. It never really upset me. They were better than me.

We went for a swim in the ocean and ate our picnic near the "Singing Sail". We used to joke that it was from Captain Cook's ship. It's a sail, made of steel or concrete, that the wind catches so it sings. It used to whistle when the wind hit it. I enjoyed being next to it and hearing it sing.

They sang *Happy Birthday* to me, and we had a cake. They gave me a card written by Mrs Darling saying, "Happy Birthday". Mrs Darling was the nicest human being I'd ever met. Her family made me feel welcome every time I visited. Made me feel like part of the family.



*Beach*, by **Katie McGuire** | Digital Photograph

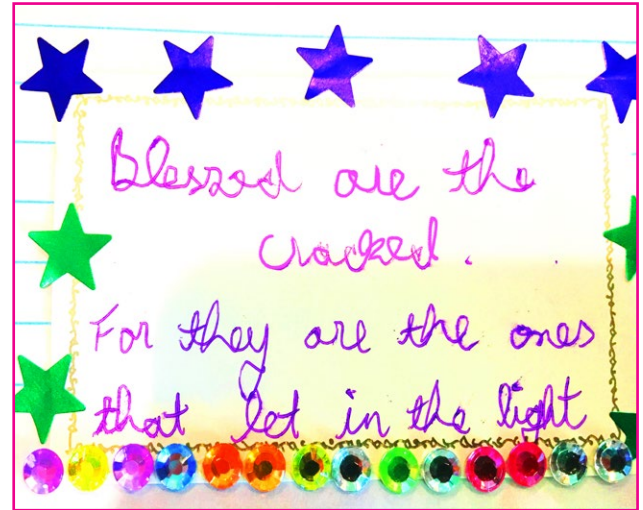
## Maria Angelina by Min | *Gympie*

Maria Angelina had the misfortune of being born the third child of a bombastic domineering Italian papa. Her childhood was spent in the knowledge that she, as the firstborn daughter of the family, was destined for the convent. Somehow, she developed an awareness of herself as a person and began to reject this destiny.

As she became more and more aware of other possibilities, she began to discuss her thoughts and feelings with her older brother, Luigi. He had his own rebellious feelings and had decided the life of a priest path that had been laid down for him by his father was not going to be satisfactory. Taking the cue, and encouragement, from his younger sister, he planned an escape for them both.

Their wrathful father however, got wind of the plan and stopped Luigi as he attempted to climb through the window. Maria Angelina had already made it onto the balcony and shimmied down the drainpipe to safety.

She made her way through the town, carefully avoiding the many searching fingers aimed at her luscious derriere. Men didn't arouse any interest in her. She had a constant image of her father to turn her away from any potential of allowing another man to control her life. She was free.



Affirmation Card Created During Workshop, by **Min**

## The raft

by Barry Bourke | *Cairns*

When I was at the orphanage, we walked to the Albert Park Lake on holidays. We would make a raft and go out to the island. The raft was made of wood and held up by drums. It was a struggle trying to keep the raft balanced. Two orphans were able to climb aboard. It took around ten minutes to get to the centre and the island. We would fish for yabbies which was fun. The lake was fairly clean, but you wouldn't swim in it. These days the lake is a big part of the Grand Prix. The racing track circles it.

## Red skates

by Roslyn Hamilton | *Bundaberg*

Early in the night,  
When I rushed to the police station,  
Escaping,  
Running away at the age of fifteen,  
It was then, that I wished I had  
the bright red skates.



*Red Skates*, by **Roslyn Hamilton**  
Sculpture: acrylic and paper pulp, & text , 24 X 41 x 23cm

## First love

by Ruth Andersen | *Gympie*

The first time he told me he loved me the birds  
were singing, and roses bloomed.

I felt loved.

I'd never been told I was loved before then.

## Listen to us

by Evie | *Rockhampton*

Through the years we have spoken about our  
pain and trauma.

Listen to us.

We are tired of fighting, crying, and explaining,  
Listen to us.

If discouraging and unpleasant days come  
your way, don't be despondent or defeated,  
Stand strong.

Listen to us.

Ears go deaf, hearts die, moments pass, once to  
hear, but they come back.

Listen to us.

We were told to stand back, not anymore.

We want to come forward.

Listen to us.

Years are creeping up on us,  
Bring this to an end.

Listen to us.



*Photo of Heart of Lights by Anthony*  
Digital photograph by **Katie McGuire**

## A beautiful light

by Lynette Jones | *Brisbane*

It was the 80s in QLD, the Joh era, and a mate and I headed out for a drink in the valley. We met up with another friend at the Irish Club who had a bunch of pills which we all took, not even thinking about what they were, or what the consequences might be. From that point on I don't remember much.

The police found me unconscious out the front of the The Beat nightclub in the valley. I came to on the table in the emergency department in hospital. The nurses had already called my mother and told her they thought I wasn't going to make it. I have a memory of drips in my arms, and a head nurse being rough with me.

Then the most amazing thing happened. Shortly after I told the nurse to piss off, I left my body – I was looking down on myself on the table. I saw a powerful light coming towards me. It was so beautiful and peaceful. I was bathing in it for a moment but then I turned around and was back in my body. This memory has always stayed with me.

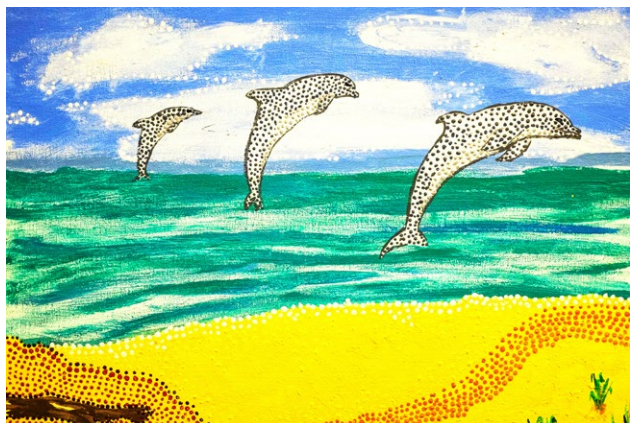
The doctors told me afterwards. I was very lucky. If I had been found half an hour later, I'd have been dead.

*What I went through*, by **Allan Marshall**  
Acrylic on Canvas, 790 x 710 cm



*God's Light*, by **Bobby Hodson** | Acrylic on Canvas, 40x30cm





*Dancing Dolphins*, by **Marlene Wilson**  
Acrylic on Canvas, 40 x 50cm

## The miracle

by Lynn Stott | *Brisbane*

My lucky break happened when my boys were young. We had horses and my husband Albert bought a horse truck. I was standing at the back of it when the cord broke, and the heavy door came down on my head – all three quarters of a ton.

It took three men to lift it off me. I died on the way to the hospital in the ambulance. Then in the hospital the doctors told my husband and sons I could not be saved. But they worked on me again and I came back.

When I came to, I saw a beautiful young man's face in front of me, "Are you an angel?" I asked.

He was a nurse.

I stayed in hospital for nine days with a broken foot, broken ribs and a broken head. But I was alive. Back from the dead.

## In the barrell

by Bobby Hodson | *Brisbane*

How many stories we all have of how lucky we are that we are still on this earth. I believe there is a reason for this.

One day the weather was good, a cool breeze flowed across our faces as we sat out in the waves, looking around at the beautiful coastline, all the way down about twenty miles. The trees, the friends. It was so lovely with my old mates at the beach. We were getting hungry, so we all decided to come in on the next wave.

I was the last one out. The last set of the day came rolling in and I paddled over to the perfect wave. I slipped down the wave's face looking down the line. It was just about to barrel. I set myself and my board up, ready to drop into the barrel.

Then two dolphins dropped in on me. Wow! What a lovely moment in life to help me forget about my past.

There is no photo, but the memory is still as fresh as it was then.



*Happy Times*, by **Bryan Hartas** | Acrylic on Canvas, 40x50cm

## A day at the beach

by Deborah Jackson | *Gympie*

At Mooloolaba with my children,  
 We walked along the beach,  
 Blue water, white sand,  
 Little crabs walking sideways,  
 Kids and adults swimming,  
 Kids laughing,  
 People talking,  
 The sea calm,  
 The waves lapping,  
 Salt in the air,  
 The sun was hot,  
 A touch of sunburn,  
 Fish and chips and a chocolate frappe,  
 An Italian ice-cream, too – boysenberry  
 and salted caramel,  
 Happy,  
 Full of love for my kids and their love for me.

## Coming from the fringes



*Sea Shell*, by **Alex Temesuary** | Acrylic on Canvas, 50x40cm

by Noel Lorenzo | *Gold Coast*

The shoreline was extended by reef.

The sun was warm, and the shells made gentle  
 noises as the waves swept them back and forth.

I noticed some were worn and some weren't.

I was fifteen.

The new shells were me.

The sun was radiant.

I loved life.

I didn't care how much I had seen.

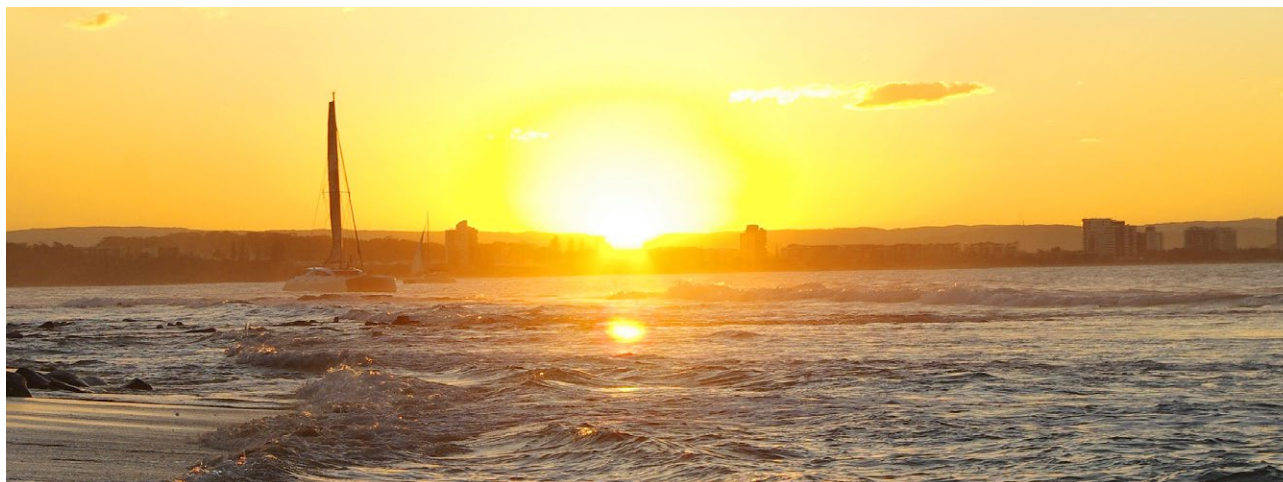
All I loved was the feel of the surf,  
 cleansing me.

The crystal water,  
 The energy of the waves,  
 Powerful and often dangerous.

The edge was where I lived.

Beautiful.

The edge was better than the fringes.



*Breaking Waves at Sunset*, by **Colleen Stevenson** | Digital Photograph

## Upside down is downside up

by Trish Ambrose | *Townsville*

Sitting on the beach watching the sun go down  
in Mexico feeling a sense of peace.

The colour of the sky meets the drowning of  
the big sun.

Red and round.

The sea smells of salt,  
Waves crash against the rocks.

Watching each minute,  
The sun lowering into the calling of the sea.

Waiting for the end of the day,  
And the darkness of the night.

The moon shining into the sky.

Stars too many to count.

## Noosa river

by William Pike | *Brisbane*

Noosa River mouth. Sun shining permeating  
my being to my soul.

Water lapping, ready to cool and refresh.  
I could melt, it'd be okay to melt, although I  
might sunburn – OUCH!

The water cools me right down as I slide in.  
Slow boats glide by. I'm safe with my big sis  
Angie. She's tough, uncompromising.

I realise I have been so tense!  
This is what normal folk must feel like? WOW!  
I gotta do this more often.

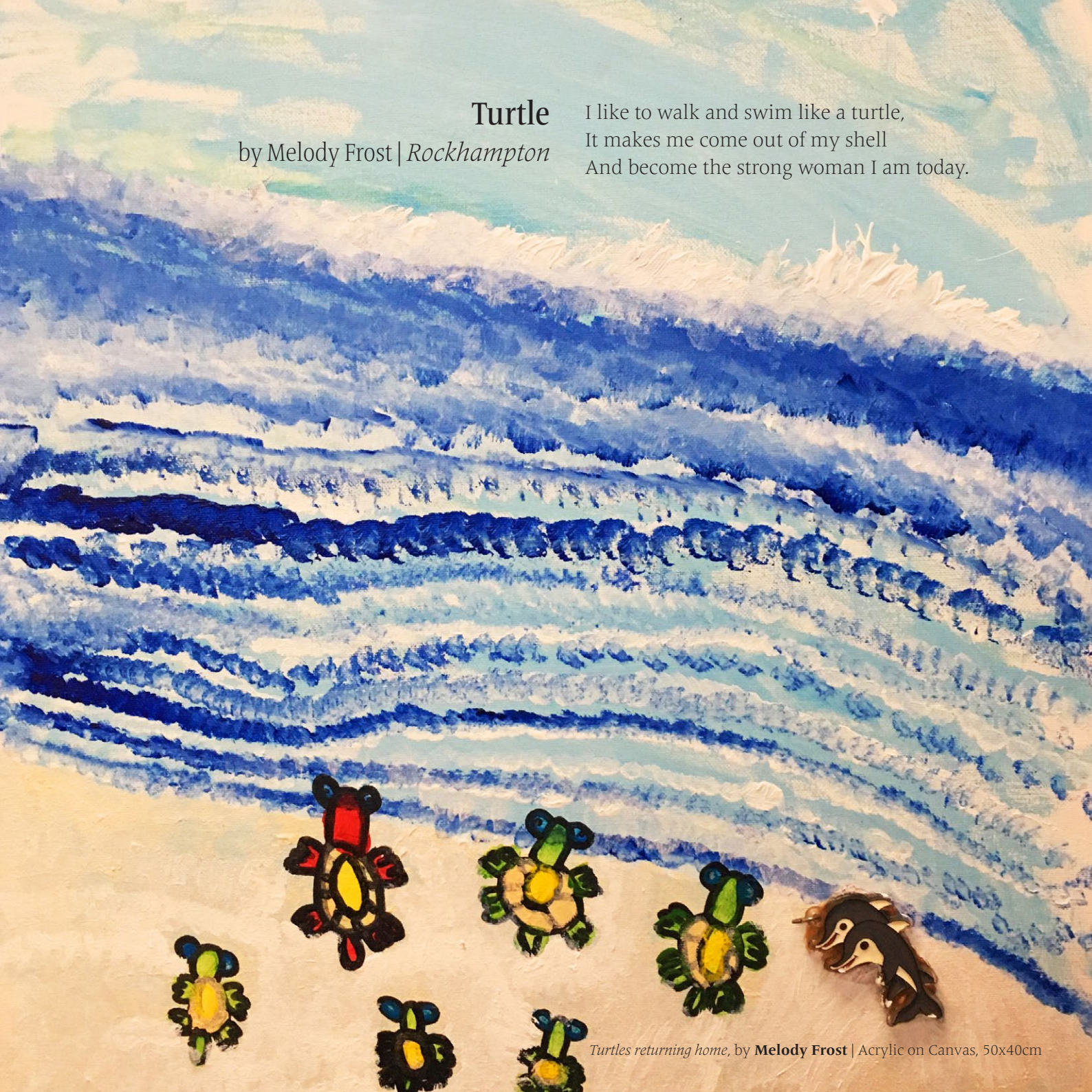
Sometime when I've worked out how to.  
The sun bakes down. My body loves  
this feeling.

I can let go of the terror here.  
Let it sink down into the hot sand, back into the  
Earth Mother who is my home.  
My Paradise.

# Turtle

by Melody Frost | *Rockhampton*

I like to walk and swim like a turtle,  
It makes me come out of my shell  
And become the strong woman I am today.



*Turtles returning home*, by **Melody Frost** | Acrylic on Canvas, 50x40cm

# My baby

by Gloria Lovely | *Brisbane*

I remember the day, the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1963. I had been with child for quite some months. It seemed like forever, but it had only been nine months. I was told by my doctor I would be having my baby on the 29th of December. So I sat, waiting for something to happen.

My mother had told me I would be in lots of pain. I was thinking, "Oh Gee, I hope I'll be alright." I was worried I'd be like Mum. Three days of pain and saying Hail Marys but not finishing them. "Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, Aah AAH!" I didn't want to be like that. I was so worried.

The 29th passed and the 30th too. Nothing happened. Then on the 31st something started. "Oh wow, this is it." I was getting excited. My baby was coming!

As the hours went by the pains grew stronger and stronger. I rang my doctor and told him what was happening and how long I'd been getting pain. "Off to the hospital you go!" he said.

I went into the labour ward. I was taken by a nurse. I was anxious because I could hear a woman screaming in the next room. Oh no! I hoped I wasn't going to be like that. I told the nurse, "I'm not going to be like that. No way!"

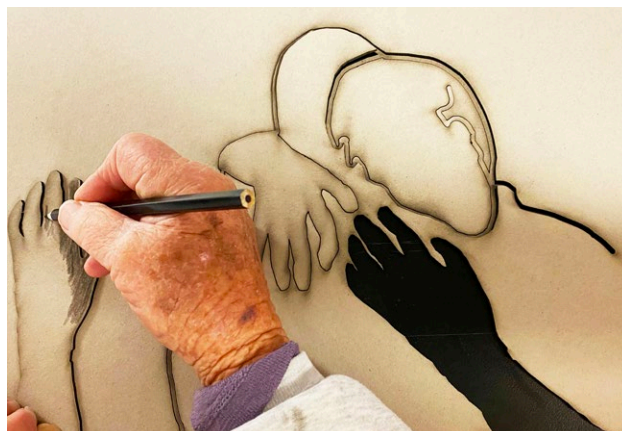


Photo of Gloria working on her piece entitled 'Loving Embrace'

She said, "Don't worry, you do whatever you want."

But I was determined not to scream.

The pains were getting really bad. The nurse asked me if I'd like a needle for the pain, but I shook my head no. But as time went on and the pain became stronger, she could see me suffering and said, "I'm going to give you a needle now."

"Okay," I said.

Minutes later the doctor arrived. Nurses crowded around and my baby came.

I felt immediate joy. It felt like a physical thing. Love for my baby poured from me. It was the most beautiful feeling in all the world. It was my first moment of wondrous joy. It was so, so wonderful to be feeling full of love and joy, something I had never experienced before in all my life. The most beautiful feeling.

Full of joy. Full of love.

## Moments of joy

by Lee Lomas | *Gympie*

The day my twins were born,  
The colour of their beautiful red hair,  
The sound of laughter,  
The taste of roast lamb and the Greek  
meatballs from Jonny's Green Room,  
The smell of Dettol,  
The feel of velvet,  
When I am happy my heart feels as if it  
lifts up to my brain.

## The day you were born

by Suzie Saville | *Townsville*

The day you were born,  
Brought sunshine within,  
To see what I had made.  
  
So little with such a sweet smell,  
You were soft to hold.  
  
When you cried,  
I put you close to me,  
To answer your needs.  
  
As comfort grows,  
I watched you grow,  
To a beautiful child,  
That I was so proud of.

*Burst of Colour*, by **Colleen Stevenson** | Digital Photograph



# Surviving my own death

by Marjorie Earl | *Cairns*

I died giving birth to my youngest daughter, Jaime, due to a ruptured uterus – she didn't want to be the same as everyone else and come out in the usual fashion – the tiny Prima Donna burst onto life's stage via bursting through my belly button.

As I lay dead on the table, I saw a very soft, very bright light off above me to my left. It was so peaceful being drawn to the light – more peaceful than anything I'd ever known. I liken it to busting for a pee – and the total relief when it is released. I was in a happy place.

Then, softly, my mother's voice came from my right. She had died when I was twelve, but her presence was as real to me in that moment as if she was still alive. She told me I was dead and asked me if I wanted to stay dead. I had no hesitation in saying yes. Yes, I wanted to stay dead. Yes, I wanted to stay and explore the total peace I was enjoying.

My mother gently reminded me that I had a baby daughter and two other beautiful daughters to live for. She reminded me how tough it was to grow up without a mother and she told me my baby would be blamed for my death. Again, with no hesitation whatsoever, I decided I wanted to live.



*Silhouette*, by **Jewels Fenner**  
Acrylic, Watercolour and Ink on Canvas, 40x50cm

I have not regretted that decision even once in the nearly thirty-five years since, but I know that the choice was mine to make. If I had chosen to stay dead, I would not be here today.

My mother was my miracle.



*Portrait of A Free Spirit*, by **Bobby Hodson** | Acrylic on Canvas, 60x50cm

## My grandson brings me so much joy

by Bridgette Birda | *Rockhampton*

I enjoy spending time with my grandson,  
snuggling on my bed, watching movies together.  
My TV is on the right-hand side. Max is on my  
right. I place my hands on his kneecaps. He lies  
flat on his back with his knees up.

I enjoy touching and being affectionate with  
him. He enjoys it too and says, "Grandma, you  
really love my kneecaps, don't you?"

When I haven't seen him for a few days he runs  
up to me and goes, "Here you go Grandma! You  
can give me kneecaps a rub."

I feel both of us light up like a Christmas tree  
the instant we see each other. We have an  
amazing bond.

## Grateful

by Robyn Ellis | *Gold Coast*

Her eyes looked beautiful as she gazed into  
my soul.

Love and acceptance flowed from Grandma,  
Washing away my pain and anguish.

Arms outstretched with unconditional love.

Oh! How I miss her.

The scent of carnations remind me of her,  
And how her face lit up every time I  
brought them.

Her shining smile made my heart sing  
with delight.

Her touch washing over my being,  
In a moment of joy.

## The world's happiest place

by Marjorie Earl | *Cairns*

In the car with my granddaughter Jesse-Rose at Toad Hall, Disneyland. Jesse and I hadn't had much time together, but this moment was just the two of us. We both got in the car outside Toad Hall, lots of people around in the world's happiest place. It was exciting because we were overseas, accomplishing a lifelong dream.

I grew up reading *Wind in the Willows*, but I never expected to be "there" with Jesse, pain free and childlike. We acted crazy – Jesse had the wheel – I was "terrified" of her driving just like I would have been had Toad been driving. Fun, laughter, just the two of us, pure joy in the moment – bonding, connecting. Grandma and granddaughter – an eleven-year-old little girl – laughing, crazy – falling in with each other. Body akimbo – both bodies.

A magical Disneyland moment. A turning point. Love. No disability, just joy.

## Silvering of hair

by Gloria Lovely | *Brisbane*

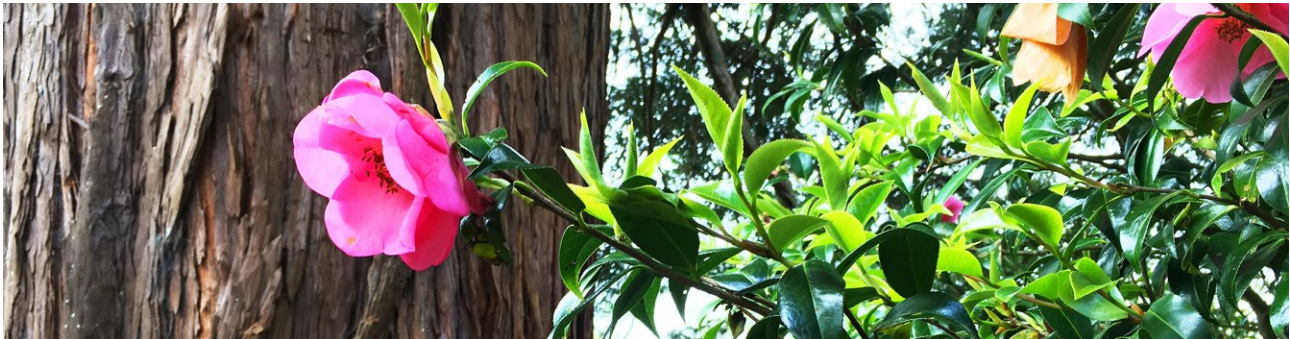
The silvering of hair,  
The wrinkles in the skin,  
May show one's age,  
But not the beauty within.

## Shelling peas

by Carolyn Frawley | *Cairns*

Staying with some early foster parents, I remember looking out the window watching the college boys from Riverview College rowing up and down the river. It's a Sunday and I've walked home from Sunday school. As I walk into the house the smells of a baked dinner cooking greet me and I'm asked to shell the peas.

*Pink Flower*, by **Colleen Stevenson** | Digital Photograph



## The lift that changed my life by Michael Collins | *Brisbane*

It was the middle of summer and I had been standing on the side of the road for the past couple of days, as I hitchhiked from Norseman to Perth. I'd had a couple of short lifts, but I'd been stranded for several hours, and night was falling.

Just before sunset a car pulled up. As I got in, I noticed the driver was a middle-aged man and the young lad sitting beside him seemed too young to be his son. I felt my usual sense of discomfort as I settled into the back seat, situating myself in such a position that I could measure the eyes of the driver. As we continued our trip towards Perth, I began to notice that as I studied the man, he too was studying me. Our eyes clashed on occasion, yet neither of us spoke to each other.

About thirty minutes into the trip, the driver briefly turned towards me and said, "You're angry, and you don't trust people, do you?"

Taken aback, I tried to deny what I considered to be an allegation. A few moments of silence passed between us before he spoke again. "You should focus that distrust into a positive. Find a job where you can do that."

I thought that comment was strange, almost insulting, and we did not speak again until we parted ways in Perth.

Some six months later, I got a job with Mount Newman Mines in Port Headland. My first

position with the company was that of a fettler, working the rail lines between the port and the mine. After several months, I was given the position of rail-car inspector, which in reality is a glorified trades assistant. It was here that I found my true calling. I was elected by the other employees to become shop steward. Soon afterwards I was elected to the position of Secretary of the Port Headland Branch of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) representing over 800 members of the union.

I learned I was good at my job and had been able to get the company to reverse many of their decisions, whether that be preventing an employee from being sacked to influencing the terms and conditions of my members.

Today I am the person I am because of the knowledge and skills I've acquired. I found my calling because of that man who had given me a lift so long ago. My career has granted me many opportunities to meet and communicate with so many people from Prime Ministers to company executives and most of all ordinary hard-working people.

I've had many jobs and careers since that day forty-six years ago and consider that man and that lift as one of my most important defining moments.



*Free as a Bird*, by **Joe Murrins**  
Cyanotype on watercolour paper, 29.5x21cm

## Bird bath

by Kylie Brand | *Gympie*

Sitting at the table, looking outside.  
It's only a matter of time before the fun begins.

One, two,  
Then three and four.

Five happy birds meet at the bird bath.

A few drinks and a look around.

Then – the fun.

The splashing starts,  
Balls and drops of water fly about.

Birds coming and going.

Some just to drink,  
Some to bathe,  
Some both.

Little finches,  
Robins,  
Wrens,  
Honey eaters,  
Doves,  
Willie wagtails,  
And 'Loopy' the fantail - one of the regulars.

Feeling good,  
Clean and refreshed,  
And I am happy.

## On the bridge by Jessie Morwood | *Brisbane*

I was miserable. There was no way out. I had been forced into marriage with my uncle after he raped me at seventeen. I was locked up raising his infant children and taking his sexual and physical abuse daily. I rang our family lawyer and asked if I could leave and take my stepchildren with me. I should have known better. He was my grandmother's lover after all...

His "advice" was that I couldn't leave and take my stepchildren as they weren't mine and if I left and left them behind, he would make sure I was found to be an "unfit" mother and would personally ensure they took my own baby off me. I gave up. What was the use?

My life was so hellish that I decided to take my own life. I didn't want my children to suffer so I decided to jump off the town bridge, that way they wouldn't see my dead or dying body and would be alright.

The day I'd selected came and I walked into town and dropped my children off at the baby clinic with the nurse, Sister Johansson – one of the few people I ever trusted. I thought she would look after them for me.

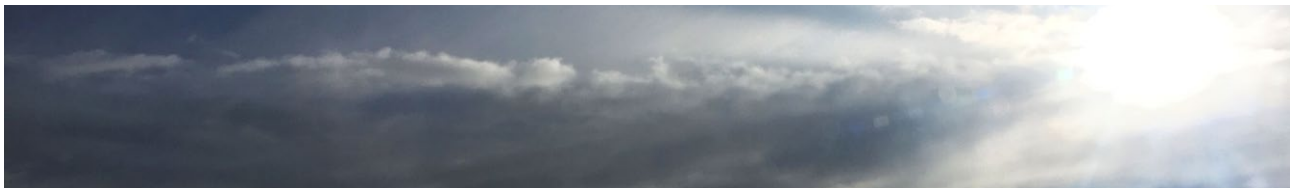
I walked out on the bridge. It was the middle of the day, and the sky was blue and clear. The sun was burning down. I walked out into the middle. Stopped and looked around. It was completely deserted. I was alone. Reassured, I threw my leg over the handrail and was just about to shift my weight and slide over, when I heard a voice. Loud and clear as a bell. "Jessie," was all it said. But it was enough.

Suddenly my brain was flooded with, "Who will love your children if you leave them?" I was stunned. This hadn't even occurred to me through all my planning. I thought they would be better off without me.

I lowered my leg, picked up my children and went back home.

Things didn't get better, but I was there for my children and have now been around long enough to leave the arsehole and build a fabulous life for myself. I've had all sorts of adventures and all of my children are alive and thriving.

*Awakening*, by **Katie McGuire** | Digital Photograph,



## The mysteries of life by Florrie F. F. Scanlon | *Brisbane*

1. All that we are is the result of what we have. We have a thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become.
2. When you realise how perfect everything is, you will tilt your head back and laugh at the sky – Buddha.
3. Have compassion for all beings, rich or poor alike for each has their sufferings. Have no cause for anything but gratitude and joy. Always try to be a little kinder than necessary.
4. To understand everything is to forgive everything. Be a light unto thyself. Be your own confidence, alert to the truth within.
5. You deserve your own love and affection yourself, as much as the Universe deserves your love and affection.
6. Gratitude is the memory of the heart. Be careful what you set your heart on for it will be surely yours.
7. My message to you is this – be courageous. Have faith. Go forward.
8. Best thing in life is to keep a balance, acknowledge the great power around you and in you. If you can do that and live that way, you are really a wise person.
9. Look up. Not down. Look forward, not back. Look out and not in. Lend a hand. A single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind to make a deep psychological path.
10. We walk the path again and again to make a deep mental path. We must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives. Some of the big moments in life are the funniest.
11. Look ahead and be grateful for what we have and what we have accomplished within ourselves.



*Unlocking the Hidden Dimension within the Keyhole*  
by **Florrie F. F. Scanlon** | Acrylic on Canvas, 50x40cm

## Missing the train

by Sherryl Lofgren | *Brisbane*

I was setting off to meet my sisters. As usual I'd get the train, enjoy the lazy trip, seeing all the different views from the tree-filled outer suburban areas through to the built-up blocks of the city. This day I was feeling a bit off, not sick, just not quite right. I dithered around the house, wondering if I'd go or not. Finally, I thought, "Okay I'll go!" But by that time, I had missed my usual train. My sisters would be wondering where I was.

Just as I was leaving the house, the phone rang. My sister. I hoped she wasn't ticked off about me being late. But all she said was, "Are you alright?" sounding worried.

"Yes," I said, "why not? I was just feeling a bit..."

She interrupted, saying, "Haven't you heard? There's been an accident. Your usual train ran off the tracks and tipped over. People were killed!"

I caught my breath in shock. It took a while to take in the facts.

But soon I was on my way, on the next train. We passed the accident. Ambulances were still there. The train still on its side. I prayed for the souls who had departed and for their families. Most of all I thanked God that I had missed that train. I was safe and my children were too.

## A blessing in disguise

by Pierre Crowl | *Brisbane*

From a sad blessing in disguise, I found a new dwelling in the pulse of a high-class apartment in a precinct of fashion boutiques and coffee establishments. As I stride the footpath, through a juxtaposition of fragrances and new designer fashions, carried on the tail of fabrics comes the aroma of coffee roasting. If there is any madness in such an aroma it is the taste buds, craving. Treading the footpath like I'm on a conveyor belt, hearing the tones of different voices, blanketing the airways.



*Fairy King Goblin, by Randell Armitage | High resolution digital image*

## Convicts without chains

by Brian Laing | *Brisbane*

In late April or early May 1951, a lady came to my grandparents and asked if I was ready to go. My nan said, "He's going to school."

The lady showed Nan some papers and then Nan said I had to go with the lady, who took me to the railway station where she gave me to another lady. On the train I was put with other children and taken to Kent where we stayed while we waited for other children to arrive. Then we were taken to the Tilbury Docks where we were put on the SS MALOJA. We set sail for Australia.

After a few weeks we arrived in Freemantle, Western Australia, where we disembarked on the 21 June 1951. Then we went by bus to Kingsley Fairbridge Farm Pinjarra, where we were separated. The boys were put in one cottage and the girls in another. If you had a sister, you were never allowed to visit her in her cottage.

The most joyful moment of my life was when England lifted the hundred-year ban on adoptions. Then I was finally able to go to an adoption agency and give them the details of my sister Pat who was adopted out. My thirty-year search for her came to an end when they found her in a nursing home in Dundee Scotland. Since then, I have been home about five times to see her.

## Bob's miracle

by Bob Taylor | *Cairns*

Bob was an orphan. He spent his early years in institutions and was cruelly treated. He achieved success in his working life and on retirement wrote his autobiography. He is a member of Lotus Place and has attended regular meetings for several years. At one meeting a guest speaker talked about family trees and showed a DNA kit with instructions on how to obtain one.

With the help of this genealogist, Bob found his family at the age of 75. A case of being in the right place at the right time.



*Interconnectedness*, by **Jewels Fenner** | Acrylic on Canvas, 30x40cm

## Colour my world

by Rebecca Earl | *Cairns*

By the age of 10, I had already won a few colouring-in competitions. The ultimate competition had appeared in our free local newspaper, with the chance to win a once-in-a-lifetime trip to the John Brewer Reef to see a floating hotel off the coast of Townsville. I had coloured it in the colours I thought were appropriate for a hotel that sat in the middle of the ocean.

Mum and I caught a bus into town so I could submit my entry at The Advertiser but when we got there and saw the other entries, I immediately thought there was no way I could win. Other entries included the picture being made into dioramas or printed onto T-shirts. After hearing my worries about mine being so plain, the receptionist reminded me that it was a colouring-in competition. I left feeling slightly more optimistic. I had as much of a chance as everyone else.

The newspaper arrived a few days later and I had won! My family and I spent an entire day cruising on a catamaran, eating seafood, snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef, and going on a yellow submarine around that hotel that floated in the middle of the ocean.

## Cruise

by Bonnie Brand | *Gympie*

In 2019 I went on a cruise to New Zealand with my friend Noella. My first cruise. It was a feeling of freedom, away from the daily routine, moving into the unknown, Excitement!

We went down to Brisbane to the Hamilton wharf. I was in awe of the size of the ship – how tall it was. Only two thousand people but it seemed like a whole other world. Inside the ship was like a city. Flowers, swirly patterned carpets and golden trim on the elevators and doors, all poshed up. A huge exotic motel.

The staff greeted us, warm and welcoming in their uniforms. All the floors had different sea names like “Dolphin”. We were up high on the twelfth floor. The cabin was like a motel room with a balcony. My friend was a smoker and I thought she could smoke out there, but it was so windy she would’ve been blown away, so she had to go downstairs. But we had a beautiful view of the sea. All different colours, deep green or blue depending how far out we were. We sailed into the Milford Sound. Magnificent fjords, stunning walls of rock on either side as far as you can see.

I will never forget.

## Sitting on my father's lap

by Jan Coleman | *Mackay*

My father said, "You'll be a princess one day."  
Warmth and safety in my father's voice. Sitting  
in my beautiful sky-blue dress made of  
lace and satin. So happy to be feeling loved,  
having cuddles.

After my father spoke those words, the sound  
of his voice so touching to the heart, I bathed in  
an enlightenment of joy and happiness.

A room of warmth.

The sound of silence.



*Yellow and Orange*, by **Colleen Stevenson** | Digital Photograph

## Finding my father

by Rosemary Burrows | *Gympie*

I was fifty when I met my dad. My mum  
had never told me, wouldn't tell me, who he  
was. She fed me lies and made me think my  
brothers' father was mine too. He wasn't.

My cousins asked for information about our  
grandparents.

"I don't know," I said. "You'll have to find  
out yourself."

Aunty Ethel told me Dad's name and we  
discovered he lived in Rockhampton.

I was told, "He won't let you put anything  
over him." But I didn't want to. I just wanted  
to meet him.

He was a wonderful man. We hit it off so well  
and he and his wife made me feel welcome and  
happy. We had nine beautiful years together  
and met up regularly. He was so generous. He  
remembered me in his will and helped me with  
all sorts of things.

We clicked. It was beautiful to know him and  
have those special years with my father.

## The feeling of a real father's love

by Tanya Smith | *Rockhampton*

I was fifteen, standing at the phone booth on Lion Creek Road, ringing my foster parents. I was nervous but excited too. I dialled their number 341194. I hadn't had any contact in a long time. It was my wish to be with them.

The phone was answered. It was my foster mum. I heard the love and happiness in her voice when she asked when I was coming home.

"I'm here," I said. "Can you come and pick me up?"

My foster dad gave me a huge hug in his railway uniform smelling like clean starch and aftershave and I felt safe. The true feeling of a real father's love.

## Among the trees

by Darryl Green | *Rockhampton*

I walked down among the trees.

Found a lovely stream.

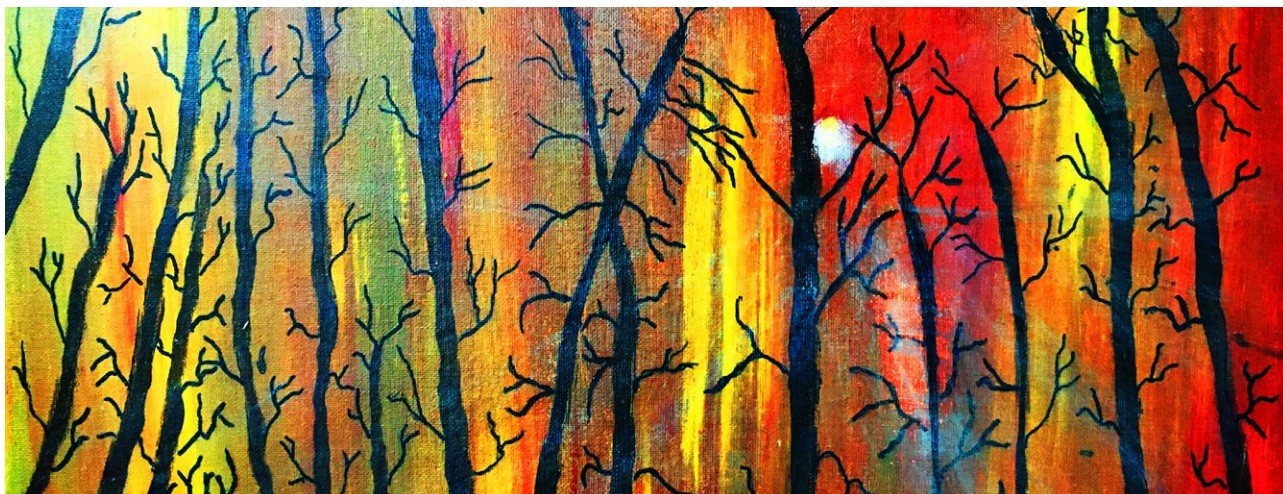
Looked out the other side.

To an open field full of cattle.

When my eldest daughter was born, she was passed to me.

I must have kissed her forehead fifty times.

*Fire Storm*, by **Bobby Hodson** | Acrylic on Canvas, 50x40cm



## The old man with a pipe

by Michael Clay | *Mackay (fiction)*

Looking out into nowhere the old man thought of days of old. Smoking his pipe with a grip on the bowl, he peered through his glasses, remembering friends who were no longer with him. They had died through his days in the war, and some even as far back as his childhood.

Thinking back brought some good memories about what he and his friends used to do, but also brought back bad memories of when and how he lost his friends. Overall, he felt his life had seen the good and the bad of everything.

## My old hat

by Noel Lorenzo | *Gold Coast (fiction)*

My old hat is from a time when I was a young man in Germany.

It also represents a time in my youth when I still had hopes and dreams for the life ahead of me.

Instead, I fought wars, killed others, lost my family and my health. None of my dreams will ever be realised.

A hat full of unwanted experiences and dreams that will go to the grave with me. Secrets that will last forever.

## Mr Walkabout

by Debra Wellby | *Mackay*

Mr Walker-Walkabout is an icon in Mackay. He walked the streets. He never spoke and always had a stick between his legs. As a kid I was scared of him.

When I was a teenager, I would often go to the cemetery to cry. One day, Mr Walkabout was lying on a bench in the graveyard. I was crying and he came over and reached out his dirty hand with grime under his nails towards me, holding a tattered old hanky.

He asked me what was wrong. He spoke in a soft velvety voice as he sat next to me and told me how he had lost his daughter and wife in an accident years ago. He owned a home but just could not get over the grief. So he chose to believe the world was not real but an illusion.

I thought he was bonkers. Crazy.

I backed off and started walking away. When I turned back, he smiled. A bright light shone, and I knew he was an angel.

He was sent to help a pilgrim. I still think of him to this day.

## Depression

by Tanya Smith | *Rockhampton (fiction)*

I'm a man that is sad and depressed, lost in my own thoughts trying to reach out and get help. But how? Not many of my friends understand and most of my family is blind to how lost I feel. I just want to feel happy, to start feeling alive. My secret is killing me. It's making me fall deeper and deeper and pull away from life.

Here I stand in this dark room, wanting to tell someone. But I can't. So I will keep trying and hoping someone will notice and listen to me. And maybe I will open up and be free.

## Who is me

by Gloria Lovely | *Brisbane*

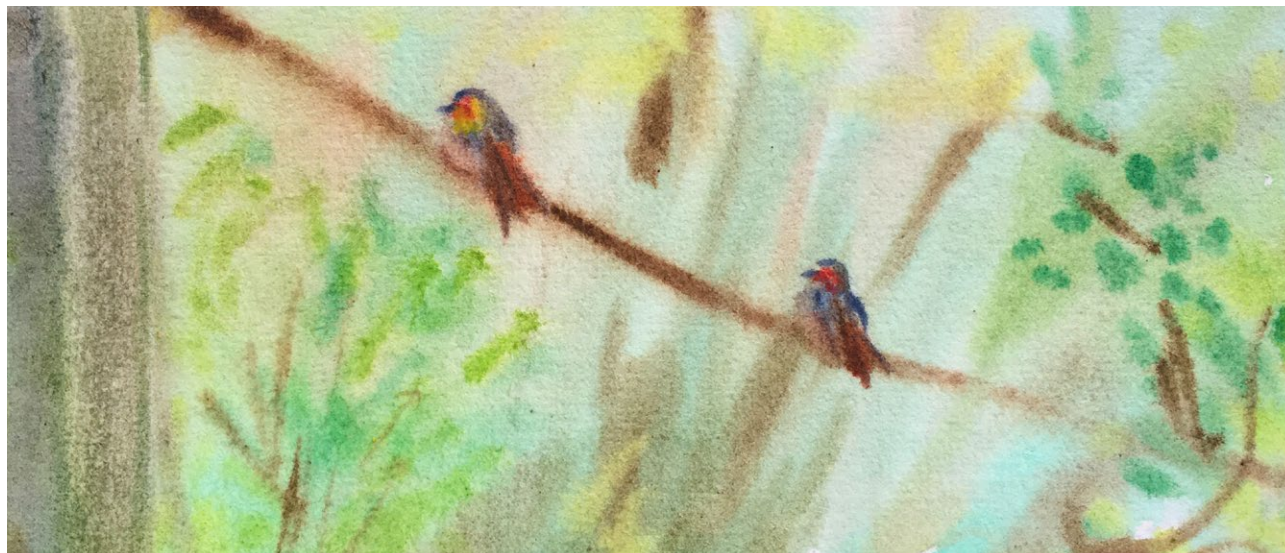
It is not me when I show anger,  
It is me when I cry,  
It is me when I wear it,  
Carrying it on my shoulders with the weight  
of many, many boulders.

It is not me when I outwardly show emotion  
that is ranting, raging like turbulent waters  
running, raging, wild,  
Like me, inwardly as a child.

But, as a child, so quiet, so blank, but longing.  
Wishing for an escape from mind, the  
dark depths.

Out of darkness glory can come.

*Welcome Swallows*, by **Katie McGuire** | Watercolour on paper, 21x14.5cm



## Soft yet strong

by William Pike | *Brisbane*

Neat, fast, balanced.  
Firm, not hard.  
Soft yet strong.  
Trustworthy eyes.  
He never lies.  
Never dies.  
His spirit, it flies.

Real, mature, masculine,  
Ever wise.  
He slays demons.  
Stands on the shoulders of his ancestors.  
What hasn't killed him  
Has made him stronger.

He's been there, done it.  
Run it.  
Outrun it.  
Grieved it.  
Peeved it.  
Thieved it.  
Relieved it.

His scars have strengthened, not defined him.  
He's the masculine heart and soul and mind.  
Destiny in pocket, swift as a rocket.  
He survived the cold, clammy, creep:  
What was perpetrated, he didn't repeat.  
Quick on his feet.  
He'll never retreat.  
His child's toy in his pocket.  
He's here to rock it.



*Power of the Sun (Crop 1)*, by **Bill Archie**  
Cyanotype on watercolour paper, 29.5x21cm

## When I understood Murphy's Law

by Terry Hamilton | *Bundaberg*

What can go wrong, will go wrong. Translated it means, "Shit happens, move on".

It wasn't until this understanding came that I started to re-join the human race. Up until then I didn't care about adults as long as they left me alone. If they didn't, I would hurt them. The only other time I would get angry is if I thought they were hurting kids, then I would hurt them.

I was becoming a person without feeling or emotion. If it wasn't for this, I would never have met my wife and children. Because I left myself open and started to learn about myself.

One day I was angry, so I smashed a wall. But on my wife and children's faces I saw they were scared. Even when they knew I wouldn't hurt them. This showed me that I had to protect them by not showing my anger where it scared them.

## Good decisions

by Roslyn Hamilton | *Bundaberg*

Black absorbs. White reflects.

Good Decisions - Marrying Terry, studying art.

Having children. Looking after my Mum before her death.

Being a believer in Christ.

*Blushing Rose*, by **Colleen Stevenson**  
Acrylic on canvas, 50x40cm



*Reaching Beyond the Child's Fear*, by **Lana**  
Mixed media - sculpture, 50x45x45 cm

## The best decisions I ever made

by Sandra Bennett | *Bundaberg*

A lot of little decisions have changed my life. I am not always the best decision maker, so I have a tendency not to make decisions, especially big ones. I celebrate my best decisions, even the small ones. Many small decisions have accumulated into moving me into a better life.

1. Giving up smoking
2. Moving away from Brisbane
3. Having a great dog
4. Keeping the small number of really great friends in my life
5. Changing my perspective about people
6. Swapping binge drinking to having the occasional drink
7. Greatly improving social skills

## Ha ha ha!

by Deborah Rose | *Brisbane*

Once upon a time I applied for the first redress  
– Blah blah blah.

Apparently, I was only entitled to \$14,000 of  
the \$30,000 – Blah blah blah.

Around the same time while avoiding  
flashbacks and bad memories, I won \$17,000  
and bought a new car! – Ha ha ha!



*A New Day*, by **Steven Martin** | Acrylic on canvas, 50x60cm

## Frogmouth

by Laurie Dempsey | *Bundaberg*

I love all animals. I can trust them.

I saw someone kill a tawny frogmouth once.  
The vet wrung its neck when it was sick and  
called it a filthy pest.

The Tawny Frogmouth looks a bit like a frog,  
but it won't hurt you. It looks like a wise  
creature, like the owl. I was never taught any  
of this when I was a young fella. Now I'm older  
they can't hurt me anymore.

Tawny frogmouths are very soft when you pick  
them up. They might hiss but they calm down  
if you tickle them under the chin.

*Red Serenity*, by **Deslyn Franks**  
Acrylic & Pastel on paper, 21x29.5cm



# Bob's eulogy

by Tanya Smith | *Rockhampton*

**Vale Bob Cox** 29/6/1946 – 20/6/2021

I remember the first day I met Bob at Lotus 8 years ago out the back of Lotus Place at the old Swan Building. I was out the back talking to Johnny Burrows and Bob saw a new face and walked straight up to me to see who I was and asked what orphanage I was in, then made a comment about needing some sandpaper to get rid of those tattoos... I was not impressed and thought: 'You cheeky old bugger!'

We started chatting every time at the weekly morning teas and slowly started to connect. I got to hear his story and many of his ideas he wanted for the Forgotten Australians.

We both got asked to do talks together at Department of Child Safety. It was then he got to listen to my story and heard things I hadn't opened-up about a lot. But he stood by my side knowing how hard it was for me telling my story to complete strangers.

He was the strongest advocate and the loudest voice for all Forgotten Australians. He never once let me down and totally supported me even when I was having strong opinions about Lotus Place, the Redress, and mistreatment of myself and others at the centre - he would be there right beside me.



*Bob's Memento*, by **Tanya Smith** Mixed Media, 8 x 12cm

Bob never stopped fighting for his dream of a Gold Card given to all Forgotten Australians and perhaps if that had happened Bob himself may have been in much better health. Even though Bob was a private man and regardless of Bob's own shame, he still had courage to fight for himself and others and use his story to educate the broader community.

He let his story be known so that other Forgotten Australians might be able to find their voice. He advocated for all, regardless of race and had open arms and heart for everyone even if they had done the wrong thing by him. If you gave Bob some time, he had all the time in the world for you.

But if you really knew Bob deep down, he was a lonely man and only really found his place in the bush with his beloved horses. That was Bob's happy place. He often said if it wasn't for the horses he didn't know where he would be.

For a man who grew up without a father, he became a father to so many others, including me. He would do all he could for anyone that asked for help and had a particular soft spot for kids, animals, and coffee. He was my mentor, my friend, and one of my best supports - all with a wicked sense of humour.



*Butterflies at Play*, by **Sherryl Lofgren** | Acrylic on canvas, 50x60cm

## Butterfly

by Deidre Dempsey | *Bundaberg*

A butterfly means transformation.  
My old life to my new,  
Shedding of the old self,  
New life in focus.

Transforming me,  
Ready for heaven.

Soaring over troubles in life,  
Drawing upon the water of life,  
To strengthen my wings for endurance,  
Traveling distances unknown.

## My sister's butterflies

by Narelle Ranie | *Rockhampton*

My sister passed away fourteen years ago. She loved butterflies. Anytime I feel like crap, a butterfly just seems to appear. The other day, I was sitting on the back steps feeling low and a big brown butterfly that I'd never seen before, flew around in a circle right in front of me, then fluttered away. I knew my sister had come to cheer me up. She was a lovely mum and a good sister.

When I see those butterflies, I know she's still watching us and all my family.

## Watching over me

by Trevor Hedland | *Townsville*

An angel watching over me:

I was just four years old when I started to walk at night around the mission. My brothers and sister asked me, "Aren't you frightened of the dark?"

I told them, "No. I have a bright bird with big wings walking beside me to keep me safe from what I can't see." My angel was holding my hand. I was safe.

*Free Spirited*, by **Linda Kershaw**  
Cyanotype on watercolour paper, 29.5x21 cm



## Finding answers

by Doolie | *Cairns*

The purpose of life is not how long you live, or that which you take nor that which you give...

But if in giving you give and expect no return, the light of your soul will more brightly burn...

While if in taking you take and lack lustre in learning, the light of your soul will dim in its burning...

The giving and taking will reveal when unfolded, your intent of their uses by the you that is moulded...

If you seek with sincerity, and to yourself you are true, you'll not find the answers, they will find you...

*With Freedom I Soar*, by **Jacqui Bisson**  
Cyanotype on paper, 21x29.5cm



## Sunrise at the boat harbour

by Harry James | *Gympie*

Half past four in the morning, I arrive at the boat harbour at Tin Can Bay. The air is clean and fresh, and the birds are starting their morning calls. First the crows then the lorikeets and then the mad cockatoos. Arrrgh Arrgh! Squawk Squawk! and then the almighty screech of a fly-by of cockies.

The water is calm and peaceful. I sit on the jetty, and I wait for the dolphins to arrive. Normally they come in by half past seven when the locals give them a feed. Boats start to leave the harbour heading for a day's fishing. Some are big, some are small. I'd like to be on one of those boats heading out on the water like I used to do.

Time is catching up with me, and I don't go out on my boat anymore. These days I come down here and watch and just use my imagination.



Sailing on a Stormy Seas, by Sherryl Lofgren  
Acrylic on canvas, 30x40cm

## Paragliding

by Yvette McGinn | *Gympie*

In 1997 I paraglided from the top of a mountain in Queenstown New Zealand. It was a cold sunny day. I travelled to the top by gondola. My heart was racing as the gondola clunked up the metal line. It seemed to take a long time.

I reached the top. The door opened and I met with the instructor. "Kiora!" he said. He was already in a harness.

We had a practice run to get the parachute to open out as the wind blew my hair and my heart beat hard. We ran and tried to get to a good speed.

"Are you ready?" the instructor asked.

I didn't think I was, but I said yes anyway.

We walked to the start, and he began to count down. "5. 4. 3. 2. 1! RUN!"

I was strapped to the front of the instructor and knew I had to give my all, so I ran as fast as I could.

The instructor pulled the ropes and up we went, high above the town.

What a rush! But at the same time, I was petrified. People below looked like ants. The air smelt fresh and crisp.

# Loveless child

by Marilyn Emblem | *Rockhampton*

When I was just a child of five  
To an Orphan's home I was sent  
Oh, how I remember those lonely days  
For nine long years I spent.

I never made many friends there  
As they said my Dad did drink  
So how did they know how did it show  
Kids have evil thoughts I think.

They were hard times in them days  
Those years were agony for me  
I didn't know why I deserved this  
Why I could not have been free.

Many long hour I spent alone  
Wondering if I had any family  
Then when I was told  
I was the youngest of eleven  
To think that none of them  
had bothered to come and see me.

Not a Christmas card I received  
Or no birthday ones as well  
Oh, no one knew the ache in my heart  
But over the years they shall.

For there was no one I could talk to  
When I felt so alone  
No place that I called home.

Mothers smiling eyes I didn't see  
Nor touch her soft warm face  
Or ever did hold my dad's strong hand  
Or feel his warm embrace.

Sometimes I thought it was all a dream  
Or that a fairy would appear  
To grant me one wonderful wish  
Out of this place I would disappear.

Now that the years have ended  
And I have children of my own  
I tell them every now and again  
Of the childhood I had known.

I have no bitter feelings  
Only many sad memories  
As I try to give all my love to my loved ones  
To make up for the love  
childhood forgot to give to me.

This is the end to my story  
A tale that is very true  
But I'm sure that there were more children  
like me  
A loveless child... were you?

So parents please remember, if your child is  
at home with you  
And you neglect to love and understand them  
They could become a loveless child too!

## A turn for the better

Tracy Baker | *Rockhampton*

Many years ago, my life took a turn for the better.

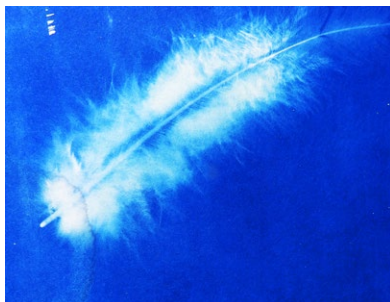
I was about thirty-four when I got very, very sick. I was diagnosed with pneumonia. A partially collapsed lung and double pleurisy. My blood pressure dropped to only eighty over forty and I was dying.

Suddenly three bright lights appeared before me. I always say these lights were my three uncles who had passed on. My Uncle Ryan who had passed away only a few months earlier appeared and told me to turn around. That it wasn't my time yet.

Immediately after his words, I woke up as if nothing was wrong with me. I told the nurses, "I'm getting out of bed."

I was in hospital for two more weeks after that. I feel if it wasn't for my uncle, I wouldn't be here to spend time with my six grandbabies and my three wonderful children. They are all my life savers to this day.

*Power of the Sun (Crop 2)*  
by **Bill Archie**  
Cyanotype on  
watercolour paper,  
29.5x21cm



## The forgotten dress

by Trish Ambrose | *Townsville*

Communally bathed and dressed in our finest  
For the Sunday Parade,  
For public view the picking and choosing.  
Would I be the chosen one today?

The pretty pink dress worn by so many,  
Recycled and again on display,  
On so many little girls, who just like that  
dress were,  
Discarded and thrown away.

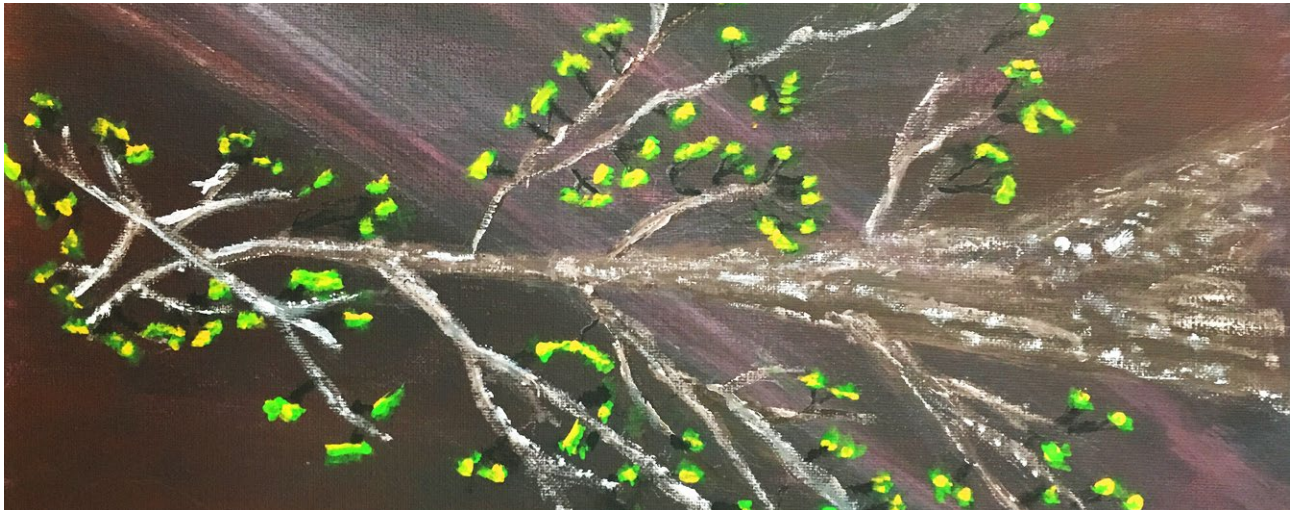
Taken from our mothers in need of protection?  
That's what the authorities say!

The situation was worse, the care was a curse,  
Revolving doors of orphanages, rejection and  
shame.

Upstanding citizens, their families of joy,  
The promise of love and a welcoming home  
A hidden agenda, vulnerable child not family  
member,  
In secrecy evil did roam.



*Friendship*, by **Sherryl Lofgren**  
Acrylic on canvas, 30x40cm



*New Life* (cropped), by **Bobby Hodson** | Acrylic on canvas, 30x40cm

## The kindness of strangers by Bridgette Birda | *Rockhampton*

I was living in Noosa, working days at Coles and waitressing in the evenings, working weekends at Noosa Valley Golf Club. My tickets to see Chicago play arrived in the post. The concert was in Sydney, so I got in my car.

I was halfway between Woolgoolga and Grafton when I lost control of the car and rolled it. It seemed to roll for a long time.

I was pulled out of the car. I couldn't breathe. People were saying, "Are you okay?" I was trying to say, "I can't breathe!" Finally, I got the words out and started breathing. Yay!

The ambulance finally arrived and took me to Grafton hospital through the Jacaranda Festival. Streets were blocked off but finally we made it to the hospital.

The people from the Halfway Creek truck stop came to visit me and gave me a toothbrush, toothpaste and some underwear. Rhonda and Wayne Scott were their names.

I used to visit them all the time but then I noticed their truck stop was gone. A new shell servo appeared down the road. I was driving past in the middle of the night, and I walked in and asked about Rhonda and Wayne.

The elderly bald man said, "I'm Wayne Scott!" I was amazed. He only works two nights a week. Rhonda is gone.

Wayne still has the silver goblets I bought them and had engraved to say thank you.

## The muster

by Gale Sawtell | *Townsville*

I see the cattle walking along in front of me,  
I smell the freshness of the bush and the sweat  
of my horse.

Sitting in my saddle feeling like the day  
is wonderful.

The bush smells crisp and fresh,  
The stream we cross is cool,  
The sound of the trickling, so calming.

The beautiful free feeling of my horse's power  
as we follow the stock.

## On the cattle station

by Leslie Brown | *Cairns*

I love a big cattle round up.  
Other workers came. We had a big meal.  
The meat was really soft.  
I was only a young fella.  
There was a hot spring, people came for a swim.  
An old fella taught me to track,  
Listen for sounds in the bush.  
I took grandchildren camping and fishing,  
Taught the children to make fire.  
At Tullaroo Station,  
I learnt to ride horses.  
After a while the horses started to sweat,  
A really strong smell.  
You are free on horseback.  
I loved it.

Photograph of Cyanotype process



## The game by Bill Archie | *Townsville*

The crowd sat on the edge of their seats as the basketball game reached an unbelievable climax. Our boys appeared to have no hope of a win when they ran out onto the court. Their opposition towered above them, to a man. How could they possibly win?

The score see-sawed as the game progressed, back and forth up the court. At half-time, by some miracle it seemed, we were in front.

Then trouble struck. It appeared the ref (to our “no doubt” unbiased eyes) was favouring the other team. Johnno was fouled off and then Smithy copped the same treatment.

However, we managed to continue to score and protect our lead. Then the unthinkable happened, Chris rolled his ankle and was carted

off. We were down to four players, while the “giants” were at full strength.

Our boys played unbelievable basketball as Tony showed his class, scoring basket after basket against a formidable foe.

Then we lost George – fouled off. We were down to three. Then Bill, playing solid defence was also fouled off. Could we continue to play with only two players?

The only way we could continue was for Chris to take the court, but with his rolled ankle he could only hobble around. Two against three and the whole crowd.

Our courageous boys held the opposition and when the final buzzer sounded, our coach had tears in his eyes as our boys had won an incredible game. The crowd went wild.

## Winning bingo by Patricia Robinson | *Gold Coast*

About three months ago, I was playing Bingo at the RSL. I got two numbers straight away and that was it. After that it was Boom Boom Boom!

I yelled out, “Bingo!”

The woman at the table said, “Good on you.”

I won a thousand dollars. I was going to use the money to go up to Cairns, but haven’t got there

yet. My son’s up there and he’s getting married next year.

I felt good.

I went home and put the money on the bench. I showed my other son.

He said, “No way!”

I said, “Yep!”

## At the mine

by Colin Toby | *Townsville*

We survived growing up in the mining town of Mount Morgan. We used to walk all around the mining site, though it wasn't allowed. We climbed over all the factory buildings and used to sit with our legs dangling over the side of the open cut mine, watching the ant people running around down below. Watching the little toy TONKA trucks.

Once we were caught in the mining site and were put into the "pick-up-truck" and taken home. It was a miracle we survived the night, after our uncles came home from work and found out what we'd done.

## The pushbike

by Mick Butler | *Townsville*

We used to borrow my older brother's pushbike, so he had taken out the front axle so we couldn't ride it. Didn't stop us though. We used a screwdriver in the front wheel as an axle instead. Four of us jumped on the bike and down the hill we went. Across four intersections, but on the last crossing the screwdriver fell out. And what the hell! Bodies went everywhere. On the road. In the bush. The youngest ended up in the fork of a gum tree like a koala. Blood everywhere.

*My Bike*, by **Katie McGuire** | Digital Photograph





*Morning Light* (cropped), by **Sherry Lofgren** | Acrylic on Canvas, 40x50cm

## Do not enter

by Doolie | Cairns

When I was twenty-four, I bought a Harley Davidson. I was on a long ride through Central Qld. I found myself on a rough detour road traveling parallel to the new wide bitumen road. The detour seemed to last forever.

Being young, I thought it would be a good idea to cross onto the new bitumen road, though the sign clearly stated, “DO NOT ENTER”. After being on the beautiful new road a few minutes, I was traveling very fast, well over the speed limit. When I was halfway around a looping right-hand bend in the road, the front tyre went flat. Fortunately, the bike remained upright. I mended the flat with a can of puncture repair.

I started the bike and continued to ride around the bend. As the bend gave way to a straight road, I was shocked to see that the road disappeared completely. Instead, was a large gap where a small bridge had not yet been built. Considering the distance between the spot where the tyre went flat and the speed I was traveling, I would not have been able to stop in time and certainly would have fallen to my death.

## Blind date

by Ann Corbett | *Brisbane*

The day I met my husband, it was an evening blind date.

We were at the Golden Ox at Redcliff, outside. I can picture him get out of a ute – he was late.

I said “Hello, you’ve met me”.

We went into the restaurant. There was the smells of the food and a lady playing the piano. He had lamb cutlets and I had steak. I remember the smell of the wine. The lady playing the piano came around asking if it was our anniversary. We didn’t want to tell her we were on a blind date! I was wearing a red top so she started playing ‘Lady in Red’.

I remember the feeling of acceptance – that he accepted me, and I had never felt that before. Neither of us wanted to end the date. We went for a walk. We were parked in different spots. He walked me to the car. He gave me a peck on the cheek and I felt like I was 16 again.

Even now to wake up every day, I feel the most blessed person in the world.

## These things I love

by Mary Adams | *Gold Coast*

Falling in love for the first time,  
On the road,  
Rainforest walks,  
Running waterfalls,  
Reflecting on the past when I interact with  
others who were in institutions,  
Cloudy days,  
Hugs with the ones I love,  
Meeting up with long-time friends and  
sharing stories.

## Puppy love

by Susie Petersen | *Gold Coast*

I took my new little puppy to the beach.  
  
Running through the water,  
Sun shining on my face,  
The smell of the sea.  
  
Feeling of love,  
Holding my new companion,  
Hearing the waves of the sea.

*Puppy and kittens at play*, by **Sherryl Lofgren**  
Acrylic on Canvas, 40x30cm



## Taking flight by Leslie Brown | *Cairns*

When we broke out of the boys' home we went through Toowoomba. The police had set up a roadblock for us, but we ran all the way to Toowoomba. We found a car from near the railway siding. We were going to go straight through that roadblock and smash it.

We jumped out of the car and kept running to the top of Toowoomba hill for a couple of days. We could see everything. One day it was very quiet. I said, "It's time we walked down off this hill."

We found an old Zephyr, but the old fella came out, so we left that and walked along a bit further. I saw this airport, where all the bush pilots go.

"Hey," I said. "That's an easy way to get out of here!"

But the others said, "No way."

I wasn't worried. "As long as we get up in the air, then we can worry about getting down later," I said. I was that kind of person.

The boys didn't want to be in it. So, we just kept walking towards Cherbourg. We passed a servo and came across a schoolhouse without any kids – it was school holidays.

It was a long bloody journey. We just wanted to get as far away from that place as we could.



*Flight*, by **Katie McGuire** | Digital Photograph

## Flying

by Bobby Turnbull | *Gold Coast*

Flying, you have the freedom of an angel.

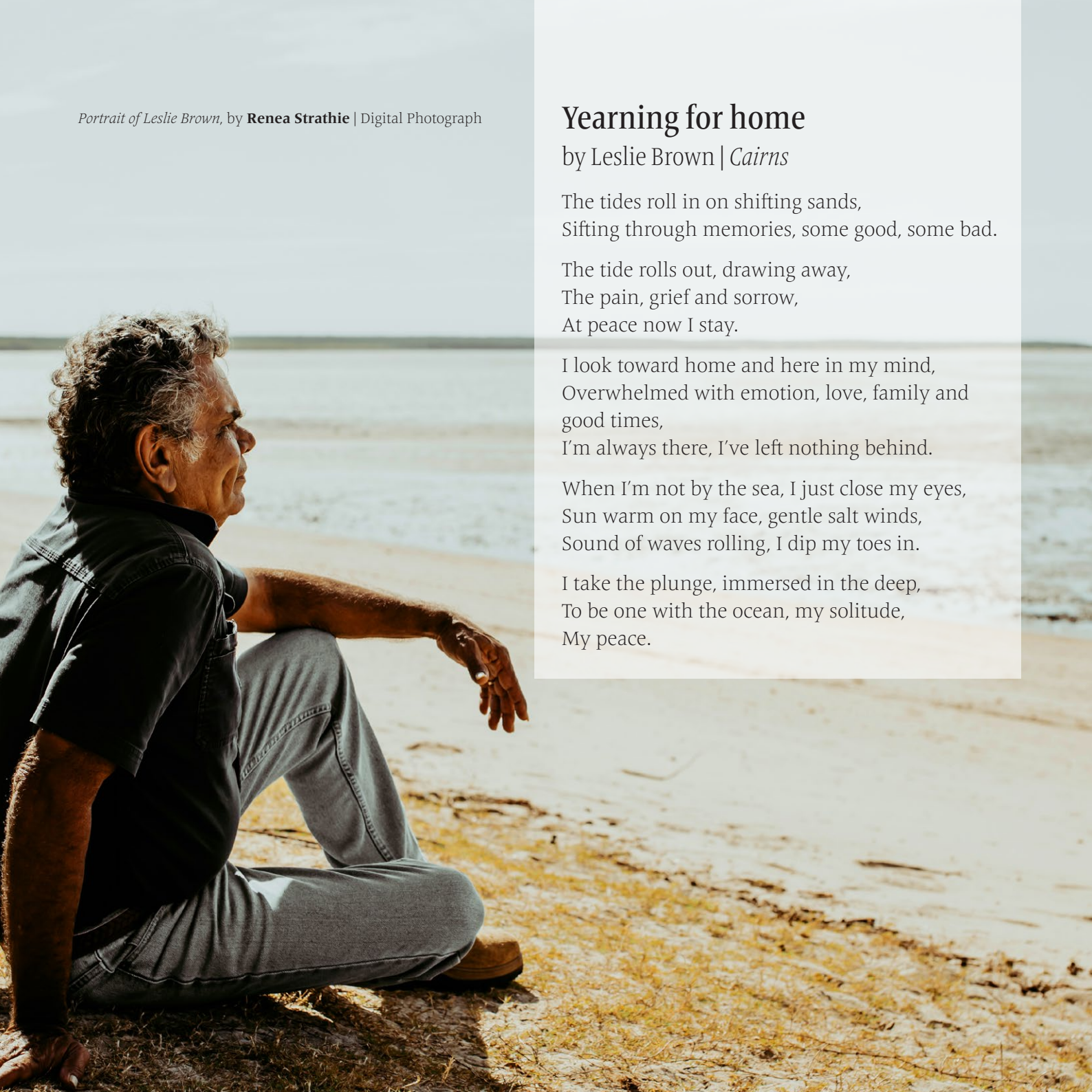
Seeing the world from above rather than on earth.

Rather than walk off our challenges,  
Flying, our opportunities are endless.

If you never give up.



*Green Tree Frog*, by **Alex Temesuay**  
Acrylic & Paint pen on Canvas, 40x50cm

A photograph of a man with curly grey hair, wearing a dark short-sleeved shirt and grey trousers, sitting on a sandy beach. He is looking out towards the ocean under a clear sky. The background shows the gentle waves of the sea meeting the shore.

Portrait of Leslie Brown, by **Renea Strathie** | Digital Photograph

## Yearning for home

by Leslie Brown | *Cairns*

The tides roll in on shifting sands,  
Sifting through memories, some good, some bad.

The tide rolls out, drawing away,  
The pain, grief and sorrow,  
At peace now I stay.

I look toward home and here in my mind,  
Overwhelmed with emotion, love, family and  
good times,  
I'm always there, I've left nothing behind.

When I'm not by the sea, I just close my eyes,  
Sun warm on my face, gentle salt winds,  
Sound of waves rolling, I dip my toes in.

I take the plunge, immersed in the deep,  
To be one with the ocean, my solitude,  
My peace.

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# Unexpected Forces | Stories and poems by Forgotten Australians\*

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Unexpected Forces is collection of fiction and non-fiction works that came out of 'The Healing Power of Story' creative writing workshops held across Queensland as part of the Reconciling Histories project. The project is supporting healing and joy for people who have a history of lived experience of institutional or out-of-home care.

This anthology is a powerful way for contributors to connect to their deeper sense of self and develop a greater appreciation of their own creative output. It serves as a testimony to their strength and resilience, imaginations, and compassionate hearts.



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