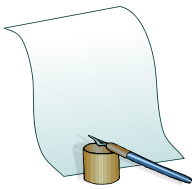


WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

February 2025

Welcome to the first edition of Wordsmiths newsletter for 2025.

Very recently, I inherited three boxes of books from a poet and friend who had suddenly and sadly passed away. I wasn't expecting this inheritance, but the bookshelves in her home were being cleaned out, and three boxes of literature were on offer, so once they arrived, I initially spent quite a few hours going through dozens of novels, poetry anthologies and countless editions by various poets, some known to me, others not.

Unable to resist a quick glimpse into nearly every book of poetry, I spent countless more hours sitting reading and soaking up the works of published poets. Over successive days, I quickly gravitated back to the 'poetry pile', eager to read Kevin Brophy, John Jenkins, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Kristin Henry, Chris Andrews, Kate Llewellyn and Philip Larkin, to mention only a few. My friend's collection also included poetry by current and former members of Wordsmiths, including Kathryn Hamann, Maree Silver and Jean Sietzema-Dickson, plus a number of anthologies published by Poetica Christi Press.

During her life, I knew my friend to write poetry that was poignant, powerful, intelligent and sensitive. She wasn't a poet to waste words, and her poems was masterful in their construction. In the many years we workshopped her drafts, I could rarely find any suggestions for improvements. Her quiet, reserved nature, enabled her to reflect deeply on her world and translate this into meaningful, poetic communication.

Fellow poets are kindred spirits, and reading through my friend's literary collection has been a soothing and positive experience. Of course now I have far too many poetry books to find homes for on my bookshelves, so I'll be sharing them around. To inherit a literary legacy from someone I admired and respected as a poet, is a beautiful and much appreciated gift.

Leigh Hay

MEETINGS

Leigh Hay led the November meeting with the poetry of Don Helmore (1927 – 2021). Don joined Wordsmiths in 2011 after years as a restauranteur, traveller and painter. Don had a good feel for poetry and read widely. He was always keen to try different forms of poetry writing. A man of strong faith, he wrote with love and gratitude. His first book titled *Behold!* was published by PCP. Don wrote two successive books of poetry titled Beyond and Solace but unfortunately he did not live to see these published as he died from Chronic Lymphatic Leukaemia the day before the books were printed. Leigh read *Can't Bear It*; *Odd*; *Banana* and *Pray*.

The December meeting was the last for 2024, so Wordsmiths shared a Christmas lunch and an afternoon of poetry, including reading a favourite Christmas poem of choice.

Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East at 2pm. Zoom facility will also be available if possible.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Month	**Leader**	**Afternoon tea**
Feb 8	Janette	Leigh, Maree S, Greg
Mar 8	Peter	Janette, Jemma, Cecily
April 12	Carolyn	Peter, Maree N, Jean

MEMBER NEWS

Congratulations to Joy Chellew who will celebrate her 100th year on 22 February (DV). Joy has been a member of Wordsmiths since it was founded by Don Hudson and Jean Sietzema-Dickson in 1989 and has had a number of poetry collections published by Poetica Christi Press. Wordsmiths wish you well Joy and may you thoroughly enjoy your birthday celebrations with family and friends.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual membership fees of $25 or $20 concession are now due. Direct transfers to : Poetica Christi Press, BSB: 633-000 Acc: 118162593.

VALE JENNIFER CHRYSTIE

Members of Wordsmiths were saddened to learn of the death on November 16, 2024, of Jennifer Chrystie. Jen was a gifted poet and mentor, to members of Nandina poets and Wordsmiths, and will be remembered for a workshop she gave to Wordsmiths in October 2019. Jen and her husband John lived in Viewbank in Melbourne and had also lived in Canberra, Adelaide, Perth and Malaysia during John's time in the Airforce. Jen obtained degrees in Science and Education (BSc 1963, DipEd 1964) and taught Science in secondary schools until 1993. She then gained a Certificate in Professional Writing and Editing in 1998. Her poetry appeared in Australian and UK publications. Jen's poems have been published in *The Best Australian Poems 2012, The Quadrant Book of Poetry 2001-2010, Cordite, Blue Dog,* and *The Weekend Australian* amongst others. Her three poetry collections, *Polishing the Silver* (2006) (commended in the FAW Anne Elder Award), *Weight of Snow* (2013) and *Poetry Pond* (2021) were published by Ginninderra Press. In 2018, *Suburban whistlestop poems : poets @ Watsonia 2018* was edited by Jennifer Chrystie, Judy Keighran & Ann Sadedin. Jen will be greatly missed in the Melbourne poetry scene and our condolences are extended to her husband John.

WELLSPRING CENTRE

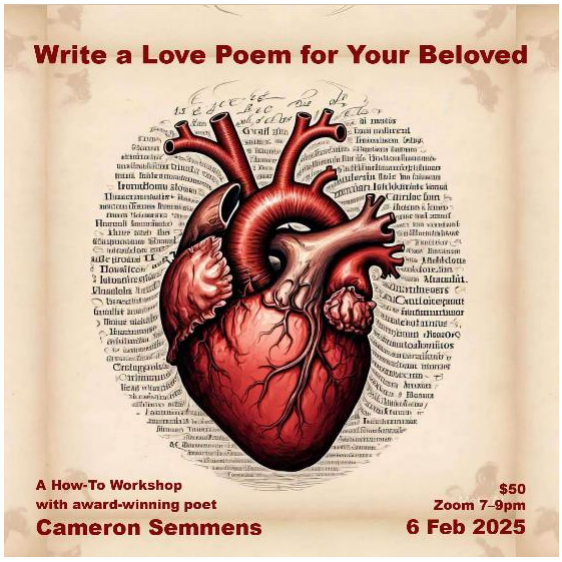
WellSpring has three silent retreats planned for 2025. Silent retreats provide a safe, welcoming space, silence, accommodation, prayer/reflection, and spiritual direction to rest, read, walk, journal.

- 2025 Autumn Retreat (7 - 13 March)
- 2025 Spring Retreat (19 - 21 September)
- 2025 Retreat by the Sea (21 - 28 October)

Info: https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au

COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Cameron Semmens is offering a workshop on February 6th via Zoom to write love poems for Valentine's Day. To book, or for any enquires, email: cam@webcameron.com



Poetica Christi Press Poetry Competition

Entries are now open for PCP's 2025 poetry competition. The theme is LIFE'S TAPESTRY – this topic lends itself to poems about creation, human odyssey, layers of meaning, multi-dimensional human experiences, enriching encounters, faith, trust, change, perspective. First prize : $300, 2nd prize $100.
Entries close on 30 April,. For more information or to download an entry form : http://poeticachristi.org.au/

Society of Women Writers Literary Festival

Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize

Open to 18 years and over who live in Victoria. No theme. 30 lines, entry fee $15 (up to two poems). Closing date 7 March 2025. https://www.willylitfest.org.au/home/writing-prizes/ada-cambridge-writing-prizes/

The Calanthe Collective Prize for Unpublished Poetry 2025

Designed to encourage aspiring and current poets and looking for exceptional poems on any theme, the competition has an open category, open to poets of any age who have not yet had a book or chapbook published, either commercially or by self-publication, by **March 31**, 2025. Entry fee: $10 per poem. First Prize $1000., Two Highly Commended prizes of $250. http://www.calanthepress.com.au/

Goldfields Libraries and Eaglehawk Festivals Inc. are calling for entries from writers all over Australia for the annual Mulga Bill Writing Award, a celebration of creativity at the Eaglehawk Dahlia & Arts Festival. Poets and writers are invited to showcase their talents in the 2025 Mulga Bill Writing Award. Whether you're an experienced storyteller or an aspiring writer, this is your chance to shine! **Theme:** Fiesta! **Poetry** (up to 25 lines) Judge: Local writer and poet, Anne Gleeson.
First Prize: $200, **Second Prize:** $50
Entries: $5 per submission.
Entries close: Monday, 24 February 2025
Mulga Bill Writing Award – Goldfields Library Corporation

Wednesday Write Night is **Writers Victoria's online writers group** where everyone is welcome! You don't have to a member to take part. Join us at our weekly meeting via Zoom, where you can spend focused time on your work-in-progress, or use the provided writing prompt, in order to keep yourself moving toward your writing goals.
Wednesday Write Night offers structured writing time. The session includes a short introduction ahead of 25 minutes of accountable, co-writing time. Wednesday Write Night is run by the team at Writers Victoria each Wednesday night at 8pm. https://writersvictoria.org.au/

NSW Poetry Prize will be open for round 2 of submissions from **1 February – 31 March 2025**. Entries of up to 50 lines are welcome from all lovers and writers of poetry.
The theme is **Discovery**. A total cash pool of $350 will be awarded to the top 3 winners.
For full submission guidelines and entry form, please visit https://nswpoetryprize.au/

Boree Log Poetry Competition

Open to everyone. Australian Bush theme. 80 lines. Entry fee $8 or $30 for 4. Closing date 15 May 2025.
https://hillsfaw.wordpress.com/judges-reports-2020/

POET'S CORNER

You bring the story, I bring the coffee

When someone says
"It's a long story…"

It's probably not that long.

It's quite likely
they've just never had the chance
to fully tell it out
–spell it out–
follow its twists and turns
all the way to the sea.

When someone says
"No words can describe…"

They might be surprised
how much can be
conjured,
ball-parked,
called upon
and thrown into relief
with words.

Tell them –
"Hey, just start talking.
I'm listening."

Their long story
may finally drain into the great ocean
of history.

And the indescribable
–that weighty blackness–
might just be
glimpsed,
outlined
and lightened.

© Cam Semmens

Beams

Sunbeams ease across the casement,
languid light reflects, then is still.
That which mortals fail to control
is chosen by the Creator.
The warmed bath is perfumed,
spirits are moistened with grace.
The sun sets roundly
as the full moon matures.
The light and the night form a day
and our God saw that it was good.

© Don Helmore

Beach Rescue

Limpets in rock pools
and mussels under jetties
are the only moist creatures I see
Seagulls fight over
charred rainbow feathers

Like the soldiers at Dunkirk
we huddle clutching
our meagre bundles
faces black as the pre-dawn sky
eyes red-rimmed

Fire rampages behind us
gusts of flame rolling down
to meet breakers rolling up
Scraps of ember float out to sea
black lace on satin

Far off in the channel
the warship waits
like a grey mother goose
for the small boats
to reach it and cleave to its side

© Jen Chrystie

Send any news for the May 2025 newsletter to treehousepoet318@gmail.com by April 15, 2025.Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando.