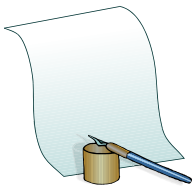

WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

August 2025

Welcome to the Spring edition of Wordsmiths newsletter for 2025.

Like many avid readers, writers and poets, I love checking the Brotherhood Books website for second-hand bargains. Recently I came across what I considered a bargain – an anthology edited by Joan Ackland, titled *The Whirling Spindle* (published 1992). I was sure this rang a bell even though I had never sighted the book before, so I immediately ordered the copy online. On checking back through Wordsmiths newsletters, I found a piece written by Jean Sietzema-Dickson in the May 2021 edition acknowledging that Joan Ackland had died in December 2020 at the age of 100. Jean wrote "She was a prolific writer of both prose and poetry and left an unfinished biography of her father when she died. Janette and I first met Joan at the launch of *The Whirling Spindle*." The anthology had been commissioned and published by the National Council of Women (NCW) and launched at the Melbourne Town Hall to celebrate 90 years of the NCW.

A further surprise awaited me when I opened the book to discover the signatures of a number of the contributors, including Joan herself. Contributors to the anthology included former and current Wordsmiths members Maria-Louise Stephens, Marguerite Varday, Jean Sietzema-Dickson & Janette Fernando.

For me, when I discover a poetry book or an anthology that someone has previously (and obviously) treasured, I feel privileged that I have known that particular poet or some of the poets included in that anthology. I guess too, that as I get older, I realise how long I've been around the poetry scene in Melbourne and enjoyed the friendship and creative works of so many good poets.

Leigh Hay

MEETINGS

Carolyn Vimpani led the May meeting where she looked at the role of Poet Laureate. Australia's last Poet Laureate was about 200 years ago, in the form of a former convict who was paid by Lachlan Macquarie in cattle for his verse. At the launch of *Revive*, Australia's new cultural policy, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced last year *the establishment of a Poet Laureate for Australia.* The prime minister said it is *through the arts that we build our identity as a nation and as a people.* A new literary funding body, *Writers Australia,* will oversee the selection of the Poet Laureate. Snippets from the current New Zealand and United States Poet Laureates were read.

Greg Burns led the June meeting with the poetry of Maria Wislawa Anna Szymborska (2.7.23 – 1.2.2012). A Polish poet, essayist, translator and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature, Szymborska was born in Prowent in west-central Poland and resided in Krakow until her death. Her books reached sales rivaling prominent prose authors in Poland, and her Nobel Prize was 'for poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality'. An Atheist, her work has been translated into many European languages, as well as Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, Persian and Chinese. Translated by Joanna Trzeciak, Greg read *The End and the Beginning*; *Miracle Fair* and *An Unexpected Meeting*.

Jemma van Loenen led the July meeting with the poetry of Brian Lindsay Turner (1944–2025) a New Zealand poet, author, environmental campaigner and field hockey player. Turner was New Zealand Poet Laureate between 2003 and 2005. Born in Dunedin, Turner's writing included columns and reviews for daily and weekly newspapers, articles,

radio talks, and written scripts for TV programs. In late 1999, Turner moved to Oturehua, a town of about 40 people in the Maniototo region of Central Otago. He was the recipient of many awards, with 14 collections of poetry to his credit. Jemma read *Sky*, *Place*, *The River in You*, *Justice* and *Deserts, for Instance*.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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

Month	**Leader**	**Afternoon tea**
August	Maree S	Maree N, Jean, Cecily
Sept	Cecily	Daryl, Carolyn, Leigh
Oct	Florence	Greg, Janette, Maree S

MEMBER NEWS

VALE JOY CHELLEW

Having reported on Joy's 100th birthday in our last newsletter, we were sad to hear that she died two months later, following a fall. She was a remarkable woman who had lived through good times and hard times, with great strength of character and unwavering faith in her Lord. She lived up to her name and brought joy to all who knew her. Joy had a wealth of wisdom and was always interested in how others were going rather than how she was. She regularly taught Religious Education to primary school children and would write a new poem for them each week. Joy was invited to Kenya to speak at a conference and share her poetry to Christian people there and this was much appreciated.

She was one of the original members of Wordsmiths, back in the days that it was known as the Wattle Valley Poets, meeting in Oakleigh. Soon after the group began publishing in 1990, Joy joined the committee of Poetica Christi Press and served there for many years. Her first book of poems, *In Search of Joy*, was published by PCP in 2007 and since then she has had four more books published and was working on her sixth book before she died. Joy was still a member of Wordsmiths after she moved from Brighton to Barwon Heads and even joined us on Zoom occasionally. She will be greatly missed and we offer our condolences to her family.

Janette Fernando and her husband Roger are off to Timor in August to run a Christian Teachers Conference. They also recently welcomed a new grandchild Patrick Christopher.

WELLSPRING CENTRE

A Contemplative Musical Journey with Russell McGregor

"Music speaks where words fall away." — Russell McGregor A contemplative, elegant, and world-class musical experience with internationally acclaimed Australian violinist, Russell McGregor, celebrated concertmaster of the Schönbrunn Palace Orchestra and Stehgeiger of the Johann Strauss Ensemble, Vienna. Through storytelling and soul-stirring sound, this special morning invites you to reconnect — with wonder, with yourself, and with the quiet magic of music.
Thursday 14th Aug 2025, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Location: Ashburton
https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au/events

Winds of Change through Art & Poetry

A morning of reflection, creativity and conversation with the opportunity to consider 'winds of change'. With inspiration from art and poetry, you will have time to explore and give creative expression to your thoughts and experiences.

- Please bring a notebook and a sense of curiosity and adventure.
- Lunch provided - please indicate any dietary requirements when completing your registration.

Places are limited so please register soon.
Facilitators: Liz Johnson and Janine Johnston
15 November, 9.15-1.00pm. Registrations close 13 November 5pm.
https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au/events

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

- 2025 Spring Retreat (19 - 21 September)
- 2025 Retreat by the Sea (21 - 28 October)

https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au

KARDIA FORMATION

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Retreat
29 September–17 November 2025
Eight-Week Retreat in Daily Life
The Retreat is based on the book *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* from the Modern Spiritual Masters Series edited by Robert Ellsberg. The selections and introductions to each chapter are by Ursula King, The publisher, place and date are: Orbis books: New York, 1999.

Ageing with Wisdom and Grace: Eight-Day at Home Retreat. 13 - 20 October 2025.
Kardia is offering you an invitation to join in forming a community of prayer during an eight-day retreat while you are at home.
The retreat will be drawn from the book *Aging with Wisdom and Grace* by Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au. You can make this a silent retreat or a retreat in daily life. You can choose to pray with one or more readings from the daily suggested readings.
The cost of the retreat is $395. https://www.kardia.com.au/programs

COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Lane Cove Literary Awards
Closing date: 20 August 2025
Details here:
https://www.lanecove.nsw.gov.au/Community/Library/Lane-Cove-Literary-Awards

FAW Tasmania 2025 Poetry Prize
Closing date: 31 August 2025
https://fawtas.org.au/competitions/

Entries open 9AM (AEDT) Tuesday 1 July and close 11:59PM (AEDT) Tuesday 30 September 2025. This prestigious biennial national prize offers contemporary Australian writers an opportunity to win cash prizes and to profile their work. A total prize pool of $17,500 will be awarded, with entries now open for **Poetry** - Up to 60 lines, all forms accepted
Entries close: Tuesday 30 September 2025.

Writers Victoria Submission Manager - Nillumbik Prize for Contemporary Writing 2026 (Poetry)

Woorilla Poetry Competition

Open to all. No theme. Judith Rodriguez Open Section accepts poetry 50 lines, Entry Fee $20.
First Prize $3,000. Runner up $500.
Closing date : 30 September 2025.
More : https://www.woorilla.org.au/enter

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

POET'S CORNER

Fireseed

Hiding
blindly
inside darkness
trusting
I wait
patiently
'til
lightning strikes
dry grasses flame
roar fiercely skywards
consuming bark
branch twig seed
bursting me into
the forest
gratefully.
I am freed
unconfined
birthed earthed
the waiting over
soon down-rooting
up-shooting
briefly smoke-screened
chiefly ash-fed
alive I thrive
freed to grow
'til treed again
seed again.

© Joy Chellew

Currawongs

Treetop currawongs
startled
launch themselves
… simply drop
into the vital air of the valley void
piercing the stillness
with their powerful calls
taking me back half a century
to snowy High Plains
and a timeless longing.

© Florence Lisner

The Newborn

The child begins in darkness,
gently floats
between an ancient
and a future dream,
struggles through blood
and pain to bathe in light,
finds a new world
with waking eyes that beam
the force of life.

The mother sees that clearness
which time will cloud
or disillusion haze.
Joy and grief blend. She looks
towards dark nights
lit by the blue flame
of her child's first gaze.

© Marguerite Varday (The Whirling Spindle)

The colours of my world

Sunrise brings a bright orange glow
whilst pure white frost melts into snow

The flowers in my garden
are yellow, hot pink and mauve

jonquils, pansies, azaleas and lilac
Some say I have green fingers –
I think luckily I have the knack

Lots of patience and time
I just put up with the pain …
and my oh-so-aching back.

© Cecily Falkingham

Beware of Night Shadows

The *Witching* hour will wait
till foxes' shadows lurk.
Then dark thoughts escape
while the night men work.

Daybreak will bring light
dispelling feral fear.
Shadows of night
at dawn will disappear.

© Maree Nikolaou