

# Coffs Harbour Writers' Group



*Established September 1986*

**Affiliated with the Northern Rivers Writers Centre**

## September 2014 Newsletter No 274

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



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### Greetings

Spring is in the air and our writers have been pulling off the ugg boots and strolling the beaches getting sand in their toes and feeling inspired to write! Should be some great creative pieces being read at our next meetings. Talking of things creative, there is much happening in September in the Coffs region. The new museum is open in the former Police Station in Harbour Drive (corner North Street, opposite the Asian grocery store) and it has some fascinating exhibits. Ideal prompts for stories. The Botanical Gardens just down the road is alive with new growth and the Japanese garden is a peaceful retreat in our busy city. More inspiration. And on the weekend of the 11 – 14 September Opera comes to town with many and varied events of appeal to all tastes. See the program in this month's *Focus* magazine or on the Jetty Theatre website. Music and song make all our senses come alive so join in and seize the opportunities to delight in our creative town! *Leonie*

## What's on in September?

**4 September 2014 10.30 am – 12.30 pm Coffs Harbour Writers' Group Monthly Meeting** Coffs Harbour Ex Services Club (check room at desk).

**4 September 2014 1.30 – 3.30 pm Structuring Your Plot Writers' Workshop with Leonie Henschke** Coffs Harbour Ex Services Club. Register with Karolyn Gibson.

**8 September 2014 10:30am Daily Life of Australian Light Horse soldier** Coffs Harbour Library. Dr Nathan Wise discusses the daily life of the Australian Light Horse soldier during the Near East campaigns of the First World War.

**18 September 2014 Writers' Group Social Morning 10 00 am – 12 00 pm.** Venue to be confirmed.

**22 September 2014 5:30pm for 6pm start.** Coffs Harbour Library. An evening with Australian author Brooke Davis as she discusses her debut novel **Lost and Found**.

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## From the President

### Planning next year's events

During the year we have had a wonderful array of guest speakers and workshops from first time publishers to developing your own social media space. It is now time to commence planning the workshops and guest speakers for 2015. If you have ideas on the type of skills learning workshops or guest speakers who are willing to attend one of our meetings and share their knowledge with our members please contact or email me as it is your writers' group and as an aspiring group of writers we can all benefit through learning how to improve our writing skills.

### Social Secretary/Publicity Officer Committee Position

Our wonderful Karolyn Gibson has had to hand in her resignation again due to personal reasons, this means we are looking for a replacement Social Secretary/Publicity Officer. Karolyn has done a great job over the past few years with promoting our events so it will be a smooth handover of the established connections and media outlets. If you feel this is something that you would be interested in undertaking please contact me or Karolyn.

### Finalised our Grant Application for the Grassroots Writers' Weekend 2015

With the capable assistance of our Grassroots Writers' Weekend sub-committee members, Leonie, Roger, Suzanne, Rosalie and myself we have lodged our application for one of the Coffs Harbour Council's Arts & Cultural Development Grants to assist with funding the 2015 Grassroots Writers' Weekend of 'hands-on' workshops and special guest authors. As our group is an unincorporated not-for-profit group we have had to acquire an organisation willing to auspice with us in our application. The organisation chosen is Coffs Harbour Arts Council. *Lorraine*

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## Members write...

**Rosalie Skinner**

### Breakfast Time

With the consistency of setting concrete porridge cools in my bowl. Even the honey drizzled on top looks more like a trickle of dog piddle, than the elixir I remember from my youth.

“I don’t know what this is supposed to be?” Chris mumbles, shoving a pale lump to the edge of his plate. “I am not going to eat it. Definitely not edible.”

“Leave it then. Here, let me get rid of it.” My eyes no longer work well enough to identify the solid object, but it certainly isn’t porridge. Not even the cooks here can turn the oatmeal to stone. With care I use my serviette to remove the obstruction from his food.

“It’s Maisie’s birthday today.” Rosemary announces to an unresponsive audience.

Kevin’s earphones squeal as he ignores her. Chris’ shaking hand splashes droplets of milk on the starched linen table cloth. Not my problem. The laundry staff will boil away all remnants of our presence.

In the corner Maisie chews her toast. Almost blind, deaf to the point of desperation, crippled and in pain her mind remains sharp and focused. While others exist without memory, their intelligence reduced to the same conscious level as the porridge, their bodies continue to function well.

It doesn’t seem fair, but that’s life. The residents are dependent on staff with little patience. Over worked, underpaid, the hallmark of twenty first century corporate incentive. Do more, for less and tomorrow, when you have proved you can achieve the impossible, the corporation will raise the bar. Remember, someone else would love to have your job.

“It’s Maisie’s Birthday today.” Rosemary announces again. Unfazed by the previous lack of response, she grins and raises a manicured hand to her permed and perfect locks. Not a hair out of place. Dressed impeccably. To all appearances a rather smart, good looking woman who seems to be ageing well.

Penny, one of the patient ones, arrives to clear the used dishes.

“Chris found this in his food.” I unwrap the rock hard lump.

“Ahh, a tooth.” Penny lifts the offending molar. “Happens all the time here. We can stick it back in, till he sees the dentist.”

“His tooth?” I grimace. Still, it could be worse. I lost my whole top plate once, vomiting. Was so sick at the time I flushed it down the toilet. Took three months to get a replacement. Moral of that story. Don’t throw up with your plate in place.

“I heard about a man who lost his plate in the toilet and then when he found it in the grease trap, he just washed it in hot water and put it back in his mouth.” Chris chuckles. His mind works well at the oddest times.

I don't say a thing. Penny looks slightly green around the gills.

"It's Maisie's birthday. Will we be having cake?" Rosemary asks as Penny passes her table.

"Of course." Penny is patience personified. Facing Maisie she touches her hand gently. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY MAISIE." She yells. Maisie lifts her head and smiles. A glint of humour shines in cataract clouded eyes.

"Thank you, my dear. I have been feeling down, not wanting to admit my age or the need to have another birthday. Funny how you dread getting to be so old. Now though it doesn't feel any different to yesterday or last week. Perhaps being ninety five won't be so bad."

Ahh, at ninety I am one of the younger residents. I thank my lucky stars I can still escape into town most days and although I have a few complaints, a few aches and my sight isn't up to par, at least I still have my marbles. Ninety five years old... and trapped.

### Leaving

He didn't look up when she left.  
The door closed with the familiar clunk.  
He lowered his head. Was he to blame?  
Would she ever come back to him?  
Desolate. He couldn't find the heart to eat or drink. Her scent lingered.  
Her memory lived on.  
Her absence removed all joie de vivre.  
Time passed but nothing eased the ache.  
He sighed, closed his eyes, and wished for her return.  
Life demanded attention. Without her, daily routine became overwhelming challenges.  
Her company brought meaning to his life.

The door opened.  
His body shook. His tail wagged.  
She was home.

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### For the diary!

**Join in the fun of the Grassroots Writers' Weekend, Coffs Harbour, 8 – 10 May, 2015**

**Hosted by the Coffs Harbour Writers' Group**

**A hands-on, practical weekend of workshops. For the beginning, the aspiring and the published writer...something for everyone. Only \$25 (accommodation and optional dinners extra).**

**More information at [www.coffsharbourwriters.com.au](http://www.coffsharbourwriters.com.au)**

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***That's all for now. Don't forget, contributions please. Reviews, writing exercises...whatever takes your fancy. And don't forget we need more members' profiles up on the website. Leonie***