

Verse In The Valley Festival
NSW State Bus Poetry Championships
Poetry in the Saleyards
5 – 8 March 2025

In the early hours of Friday morning, while most of the poets were up preparing for the last part of the competition, a group of Rotarians and helpers had already made their way to the Saleyards to set up the stage for the evening Bush Poetry event. After breakfast, part 4 of the competition commenced with the participants being judged on their selection and recital in the ‘Original Humorous’ poems category. Once the competition ended, the **winners** of each category were announced, with the results being as follows:

Traditional

First: Dave Melville
Second: David Stanley
Third: Ron Brown

Modern

First: David Stanley
Second: Maurie Foun
Third: Andrew Pulsford

Original Serious

First: Andrew Pulsford
Second: David Stanley
Third: Gerry Mannion

Original Humorous

First: David Stanley
Second: David Melville
Third: Maurie Foun

The **overall winner** of the competition was **David Stanley**, who as the champion was selected to perform at the evening Bush Poetry event.

As the evening approached, the Saleyards started to fill up with people excited and eager to see and hear what the night would bring.

Making her Poetry in the Saleyards debut, local musician **Tink Everett** kicked off the event, serenading the crowd with her guitar and songs. Next up were the **Bowden Brothers Band** who have been performing and supporting this event year after year, and are always crowd-pleasers.

The audience was then entertained by our favourite local poet, **Claire Reynolds**, who after winning the Yarn Spinning competition at the National Folk Festival in Canberra in 2015, became a Judge, and has discovered that sitting on the other side of the fence is a lot of fun.

Another brilliant performance by **Paddy O'Brien** with his Scottish / Irish heritage and a wee bit of Australian dingo set the crowd roaring with laughter, especially when he came out wearing his Scottish Kilt.

Overall champion **Dave Stanley** also delighted the audience with his humorous recitals.

Our last guest poet, was **Ray Essery**, a seasoned Bush Poet with a touch of larrikin, who with his natural abilities as a storyteller, left the audience in stitches with tales from his years as a Dairy Farmer, Navy man and Sydney pub manager.

Throughout the performances, the air was constantly filled with laughter, cheers and applause, creating a vibrant, and exhilarating atmosphere. As the evening wound down, each poet recited their last poem or story and the Bowden Brothers played their final song.

All in all, it was a truly amazing and memorable evening for all who attended, with the audience comprised of many returning regulars along with some first time attendees who enjoyed it so much that they promised to return again next year.

The evening topped off what has been a most enjoyable and very successful week of performances, competition and entertainment for the inaugural 'Verse in The Valley' event and we look forward to hosting it for many years to come.

On that note, Rotary would like to say a very Big Thank you to the following people, as without them the whole event would not have been possible:

- Event Organisers Tom McIlveen, Susan Ashton and Mary Gray for bringing 'Verse In The Valley' to Gloucester.
- All of the amazing Poets who travelled from all over Australia to participate in this event, with special thanks to Ray Essery and Paddy O'Brien for their performances.
- Local Poet Claire Reynolds and our local Musicians the Bowden Brothers for continuing to support the event, and perform each year.
- Local Musician Tink Everett who made her Bush Poet Debut.
- Nell from Roadies Café with her Coffee and Soup van.
- The crew of Rotarians and helpers who set up for the Saleyard event.

Also, a Big Thankyou to the following establishments for allowing us to hold our performances at their venues.

- The Avon Valley Inn
- Gloucester Creatives
- Club Gloucester
- The Senior Citizens Centre

Finally, a big Thank You to everyone who attended and helped to make it the wonderful night that it was.

We hope that everyone had fun, and that all of our guests and visitors have enjoyed Gloucester's hospitality.

Until we meet again, be safe and be well.

Gloucester Rotary Club.