

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – October 2024

This month's speakers: Fiona Tarr, Megan Norris



Fiona Tarr is a Queensland based true crime writer of killer fiction. Her rural noir stories are bold, suspenseful reads featuring strong female leads in small, rural towns with quirky Australian characters.

Her most recent Opal Fields Crime Fiction series has been described as a 'fast paced action thrill ride through the outback.'

Writing runs in Fiona's family. Her great uncle was Australian literary icon George Johnston who penned the classic *My Brother Jack*. Although her style is more contemporary, her Uncle's social commentary tone is evident in all her thrillers. Recently compared to renowned Aussie authors, Jane Harper, Patricia Wolf and Melinda Leight, Fiona's crime and mystery

suspense novels have reached #1 best seller in the Amazon Australia store and beyond.

Fiona lives in Noosa with her husband not far from her two adult children.

A self-confessed people watcher she loves to interpret body language and social cues. With a history of farming, working in male dominated industries and navigating the world of community services, Fiona is equipped with the experience and insight to develop truly memorable characters, authentic settings and action-packed stories.

'**Under the Spotlight**' speaker: Our member **Megan Norris** (picture right), herself a highly successful True Crime writer (but non-fiction), will be leading into Fiona's presentation. She didn't want to tell us anything about the subject – well, you'll just have to be there. With two True Crime writers presenting on the same morning, we are seriously considering to provide free Valium to attendees...



Last month's speakers: Rhiannon Elton, Jan Tarbuck



The depth and width of our member's expertise continues to amaze me. Last month, **Jan Tarbuck** (she publishes under her unabbreviated first name Jeanette) outlined her techniques on writing books for Children. "I always take them somewhere where there is no violence" is her principal advice. In her case, that somewhere is a huge tree on a property in the west of New South Wales, or the idea of a Mermaid Statue, on which her work '**Paige and Uki's Ocean Adventures**' is based on. It is a story about an Australian girl (Paige) visiting Japan, where she meets Uki. They share a dream where they visit the Great Barrier Reef, and – you guessed it – it involves Mermaids...

Our main speaker was **Rhiannon Elton**, (photo on left, with her friend Reganara (? not sure if I got that right) accompanying her. She describes herself “a weaver of tales of mystery and magic” with a whole series of books published. She is also the organiser of the Logan Writers Festival. We had the pleasure of Rhiannon’s educational presentations last year, and she expanded on her techniques of “growing your village” to, say,



10,000 subscribers. Now, I recall one of my father’s favourite metaphors (directly translated from Swiss German): “Put some cheese on the mouse trap”, code for “give them some freebies”. Well, if you jump on Rhiannon’s website, not only can you purchase all her books there, but you will also find a tab marked ‘Free Things’. Click here:

<https://rhiannoneltonauthor.com/free-things>. You can read an entire book free of charge (online), short stories etc. Now, if that doesn’t give you some ideas on how to display your creations...

What else happened?

Well, as is the custom, we started off with individual members giving us a run-down of what great experiences they had had, what achievements they reached. Here are just some: **Megan Norris** and **Lily Arthur** are re-launching Lily’s book under the new title ‘*Prisoner of the State*’. Sorry, it’s still under wraps – wait for about another month. **Jim Dickson**’s first book is at the stage of being published and is looking for a Graphic Designer... **Brian Kennedy** attended a convention – two of three of his books have sold out! **John Griffith** is writing a new story every month and has now started to write a play. Considering that John’s book series is titled ‘Bedtime Reading’, I want to see it! **Jack Kregas** is ready to do presentations of his new ‘Summer’ book at the Gold Coast libraries. But he needs to get the book onto the shelves of the library first. Sort of a Catch 22 situation... There was much more, as always. Ah, you should have been there yourself!

Jack Kregas wins the ‘Ghost’ Challenge

For those who came in late: Following the ‘Fear’ competition (see last month’s newsletter), our convenor Grahame Moore announced the winners of his second 1000 word competition. It was open only to registered members of our group, on the theme of ‘Ghost’ (or the plural thereof). A total of 17 entries were received. First prize (\$300) went to **Jack Kregas** (picture right). That one got 10/10 from the judges (and caused me to wake up in the middle of the night; I don’t believe in ghosts, but Jack’s description of the victim’s demise is somewhat graphic!). Second prize (\$200) went to **Selena Jane Budgen**, and third prize (\$100) was awarded to **Jan Kuperman**.



Thank you Grahame! Very generous indeed. **NOTE:** Jack Kregas has published his winning story to his website for free download. <https://www.jackkregasbooks.com/> - it will be available from 01 October for a month.

Big news: Titled ‘Cradle Snatchers’, **Megan Norris** wrote a feature article on **Lily Arthur**’s harrowing experience of having her child stolen from her at birth. It graced the front cover of the ‘Good Weekend’ magazine of [The Sydney Morning Herald \(21st September\)](#). . It is the cover of the front page of the ‘Good Weekend’ magazine that is part of this weekend’s edition.



Can you improve on that?

If you read good books (or even newspaper articles), you would occasionally come across a paragraph that is just so well crafted that you re-read it again. And again... Here is another one:

Death, of course, is a refuge. It's where you go when a new name, or a mask and cape, can no longer hide you from yourself. It's where you run to when none of the principalities of your conscience will grant you asylum. Chris Cleave – ‘Little Bee’

The Grahame Moore ‘Serenity Challenge:

The third and final of Grahame’s special competition series is on the theme of ‘Serenity’, due in November - see below. If you haven’t started yet, well, there is still time. But better get stuck into it!

The final competition Grahame is putting up is on the theme of ‘Serenity’. Here are the conditions that apply:

1. The competition is **only open to registered members** of our group (if you received this newsletter via email, you are)
2. **Only one story** per member
3. **No Artificial Intelligence** software (e.g. Chat GPT etc. Yes, we have ways to detect 😊)
4. The story **must be on the topic of ‘Serenity’** - your interpretation
5. It **must not exceed 1,000 words**, including its title
6. Stories must be submitted in **MS Word or Google Docs format** (not PDF). Please name the file **[name]-[title]** - for example ‘John Smith - Noisy Serenity’
7. **Deadline is 5 pm, 24th November 2024 - no exceptions**
8. **Stories to be submitted to this email address:** helensvalewriters@gmail.com

Google says that the word "serenity", is the state of being calm, peaceful, and untroubled. Well, Grahame and the judges await YOUR interpretation!

All stories submitted to be compiled into a book

All the stories (Fear, Ghost and Serenity) will be compiled into an A5 book. Grahame has arranged with [Clark & Mackay Publishers](#) and all **authors will be presented with a free copy** at our Christmas party. Talking about a ‘limited edition collector’s item! Note: **authors will retain their copyright** of submitted stories.

Christmas Party on 12th December 2024

Grahame has booked the ‘Glass Room’ at the newly refurbished **Club Helensvale (Helensvale Bowls Club)**. It is right between the bistro and the bowling lanes. Its major attraction is that the entire room is enclosed in smoky glass, which provides an almost noise free environment, yet you can see out. (Yes, you’ll be able to hear and understand what the person next to you says!). Lunch (main course and dessert) will be served, drinks can be purchased at the bistro bar. The event is **free of charge for members**. Partners and guests are cordially invited for a very low cost of just **\$40.00 per person**. Put it into your diary now - more details in next month’s newsletter.

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) **Helensvale Writers Group (that's us) - Grahame Moore competition 'Serenity.** In celebration of his birthday (was towards the end of August). Submissions **close on 24th November 2024.** Only open to registered members. See details above.
- b) **Marj Wilke Short Story Award 2024** open only to women writers (ok, this might not be the time for males to challenge them by saying "I identify as a woman"...) 1500 words, closes 8th November 2024. Click on the link for more details.
- c) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](https://www.reedsy.com) – There must be one or two that suit you!

See you at this month's meeting on **19th September 2024.** Usual time, **10:00 am - 12:30 pm,** location: ground floor meeting room at Helensvale Library. Please try to be about 10 minutes early so that we can start on time; there is a lot to experience!

Best wishes,
Franz Huber
Helensvale Writers Group
helensvalewriters@gmail.com

Place the word 'only'
anywhere in this sentence:
**She told him that she
loved him.**

**A WALK IN THE
WOODS HELPS
ME RELAX &
RELEASE
TENSION.
THE FACT THAT I'M DRAGGING
A BODY BEHIND ME SHOULD
BE IRRELEVANT.**

**Do you assume all rubbish bags you
see lying by the side of a road
contain body parts, discarded by a
serial killer?
Or are you normal?**