

The Write Stuff

<https://www.helensvalewritersgroup.org>

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – February 2026

This month's Guest Speaker: Brian Falkner

Some of you might recall Brian's presentation at our October meeting last year, when he ran a workshop with us. Remember? He's the author with the audacity to title his work "The Most Boring Book in the World", and it became a best seller!

In my humble opinion, it was one of the most informative workshops we ever had, all delivered with a healthy dose of humour.

So, what will be Brian's subject this month? Sorry, you'll just have to wait and be there. The one thing I can guarantee: You won't be bored. And one more thing: you'll learn something useful to advance your writing skills.



Last month: Christine Betts and Rochelle Miller: Do-it-Yourself Editing workshop



Every month, we aim to improve your knowledge, knowledge that you can apply to write better.

If you are like most writers, you need to do multiple drafts before the final version is published. Now, if you are a James Patterson or a Stephen King, you might have an army of editors, getting paid small fortunes to help you put your creation in shape.

If you have not written a bestseller yet, chances are that you... STILL need to have an army of editors (or at least one), which, for an amateur in particular, costs an arm and a leg. That's fair enough, by the way, they need to get paid for their time and skills. But can you edit your own work? Definitely. Perhaps not to the very final stage, but at least get the real clangers out BEFORE you submit it to a professional editor.

Christine Betts handed out an "Author's Self Editing Checklist" ¹⁾, four pages of bullet points, from which we tackled the first two of some 14 segments... Yes, of course, we ran out of time. Classes could be run so much more efficiently if it weren't for the students always asking questions, asking for further elaborations, etc! (This is a version of one of my favourite sayings when I was still in business: "Business would be so much fun if it weren't for the customers always wanting something." 😊)

First point: Read your piece aloud to see where to stop or pause for periods, question marks etc. Did you know that your word processor, say Microsoft Word, has a 'Read Aloud' function built in, all free of charge? So does Google Docs. How? Just... Google it or use the Help function. If you read it aloud, you'll hear where it doesn't hang together. However, whilst it might give you an idea of what is not working, it won't tell you how to fix it.

Second point: Point of View... Who is the narrator? ... and so forth. Sorry peeps, you should have been there. A brief write-up can't do justice compared to a presentation by two professionals.

¹⁾ No, you can't have a copy, it's copyright. But if you go to Christine's website, you can contact her, and she might agree to send you a copy. Better: attend one of her workshops!

<https://writerpainter.com/>

Rochelle Miller (who is the President of the Gold Coast Writers Association (GCWA), of which, if you are a member of the HWG, you also should be a member of) also handed out a copy of their '[Critique Group](#)' list of 16 points. Inspect your work against these, and you'll have a winner! (Yes, I'm afraid, it means work, work, work.)

A big 'Thank You' to Grahame Moore

At the end of the meeting, our convenor Grahame Moore (that's him, the thorn between the two roses in the picture above) was recognised for his untiring work for the Helensvale Writers Group. **Jan Kuperman** presented Grahame with a plaque, which she had organised on behalf of our members, in recognition of his long dedication to our group as its convenor. Grahame indicated that he definitely wishes to retire from that role by March.

Grahame, our group very much appreciates all the work and energy you have put into making our monthly events so enjoyable! Thank You.

(Apologies for the quality of the photo. Glass isn't easy to take a picture of)



1000 Words Competition – Q1, 2026: Murder



The first competition of 2026 is on the theme of a **murder mystery**. The title **MUST** be '**But you said you loved me!**' (You may have a subtitle)

The usual conditions: Fiction, or "creative non-fiction", 1000 words maximum (including title), no pictures, no Artificial Intelligence (we'll test). By now, you should have written at least the first draft - **deadline is 17th March 2026** (2 days before our March meeting), and no late entries will be accepted.

Note: Copyright remains with the author. This is a private, group-internal competition, and thus does not preclude you from submitting your story to any open competition, nor, as our end-of-year compilation cannot be purchased on the market, can it be considered as "previously published".

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) Deadline 26th February 2026: [Next Generation Short Story Awards](#). **What? You're not 'Next Generation'?** Look closer. They have categories for 'Seniors 60 – 69 years' and 'Seniors 70 years and above'. Some our group's members qualify for these... ☺

- b) [Wergle Flomp Humor Poetry Contest](#) – so you can write humorous poems? This is for you! And **entry is free**. \$2,000 first prize, plus various gift vouchers. Deadline is 1st April 2026
- c) Want to expand your Murder story to 2,500 – 12,000 words? [SNAFU – Level up](#) might just be for you. They pay 5 cents per word if accepted. Make sure you read the guide lines!
- d) **The Gold Coast Writers Association** (of which you ought to be a paid-up member by now), runs its own internal competitions. All registered members receive their monthly newsletter, which contains details.
- e) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](#) – There must be one or two that suit you!

Can you improve on that?

‘You still haven’t learned that when humans are under pressure, we’re all willing to lie.’

‘Even to people we love?’

‘We lie more to our loved ones because we care about them so damn much. Why do you think we tell the truth to priests and shrinks and total strangers we meet on trains? It’s because we don’t love them, so we don’t care what they think.’ Ken Follet – Code to Zero

Gold Coast Writers Association Membership

From 1st January 2026, **all our members ought to also be members of GCWA**, which assures us of proper insurance cover. Just in case you don’t know: when we hold a meeting inside a Gold Coast City Council meeting room, the Council’s insurance does NOT cover us. With this arrangement, we still remain independent, but we are now covered. And, of course, you are entitled to all the goodies that are available to you as a full member of GCWA!

So, if you are not already a member, click on this link to register:

<https://www.goldcoastwriters.org/membership>.

Positions Vacant: Convenor

A year ago, Grahame indicated that he wanted to retire... and then was overwhelmed with phone calls and emails from our members to be considered for the job. NOT. This time, he is quite serious. So, let’s look at the “official” positions that need to be covered in our Helensvale Writers Group (HWG):

- **Formal requirements of incorporation**, necessary in respect of government registrations and insurance: Since we are now associated with the Gold Coast Writers Association, these are covered. Which leaves...

- **Keeper of the cash kitty**
- **Membership database**
- **Member communications**, newsletter etc:

I’m happy to continue doing this (unless, of course, someone else would like to?)

- **Webmaster, Facebook etc:**
Stacey King indicated she’s happy to continue doing this

So, exactly what is the job of Convenor? Here is a summary of what this job entails:

Position Vacant

1. **You are HWG's representative with the Gold Coast City Council**, and must be indoctrinated by someone on the GGCC staff on what to do in case of fire, and where the emergency areas are around the building. This is **a one-time only** requirement.
2. **You arrange for speakers** to attend, ideally at least two months in advance. These can be authors, educators, or any person who can provide the group with useful advice, information and/or entertainment.
3. **Replenish the grocery box** (Cakes, Biscuits, Coffee, Tea, Milk), and get a bottle of wine (or other suitable present) for our main speaker, and bring it along to the meeting and take them back again after the meeting. Note: once we are back at the library, we will have our own small storage cupboard for non-perishables. All expenses will be paid out of our cash kitty.
4. **Place the pull-up banner and directional signs** in the appropriate areas to direct members and visitors to the location, and after the meeting take them back.
5. **Run the meetings**, e.g. you ring the bell, and offer members to talk about their projects, then invite the 'Under the Spotlight' speaker and, after the coffee break, the main speaker to the microphone. (Grahame will continue to bring his speaker/microphone along).
6. Ensure the room is cleaned up again after the meeting, and tables/chairs (if not meeting at the library) are put back. All able bodied members should help with this.
7. If possible, attend the monthly meeting of the Gold Coast Writers Association (3rd Saturday of the month, 12:00 pm to approx. 3:00 pm). All our members ought to be also members of GCWA, to be covered by their corporate registration and insurance.

Note: every one of these tasks can be separated, so if any of you are prepared to take on an individual one of the above items, **let's hear it!**

See you on **Thursday, 19th February. Usual time 10:00 am, at the Helensvale Community Centre**, where we met the last four months (opposite Club Helensvale).

Best wishes,
 Franz Huber
 Helensvale Writers Group
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 0484 597 451

By the way: Are you a member of our Facebook group? C'mon, go and have a look. Log in to Facebook, then just search for Helensvale Writers Group. Follow us!

**Books that were rejected
 by the publisher:**

Running to the Outhouse

by Willy Makeit,

Illustrated by Betty Wont.

OK, I'll see myself out...

One of my neighbors owns several cats. On a recent visit she introduced them to me "That's Astrophe, that's Erpillar, that's Aract that's Alogue"



"Where on earth did you get such unusual names?" I asked
 "Oh, those are their last names," she explained. "Their first names are Cat."