

The Write Stuff

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – October 2025

This month's speaker: Brian Falkner

Brian is a much-published author who has written novels and children's books depicting his many (in his words) "wildly improbable world". Brian is an immigrant from New Zealand, and has a very comical way of doing his workshops.

From wild adventures to gripping sci-fi, his work has inspired young readers worldwide. When not writing, he's visiting schools, running writing camps, or exploring new story ideas.



Last month's speakers: Ralph Mayn, Stacey King



Last month we had two "totally homegrown" presentations. Stacey King presented a riveting seminar on character development.

Before that, **Ralph Mayn** briefly discussed, and interviewed individual members on "**why do you write?**". So, you have imagination, and you want to tell people about it... yeah right, can it be that simple? The responses covered a wide spectrum: For example, Anna Crichton started writing at the tender age of 11... Olivia York claimed that she writes "about life's true events. "I fell into the trap of writing about friends and family..." she said. Ralph also briefly discussed the

emergence of **Artificial Intelligence**: brandishing two books, one by Catherine Chidgey, 'The Axeman's Carnival', the other by Pip Williams 'The Dictionary of Lost Words', he resolutely stated that "AI could NEVER write this!" [*I concur, Ralph - both very much worth studying. Ed.*] Very different, yet captivating.



Any of **Stacey King's** presentations reveal her experience not just as a widely published author but also as a University lecturer. As always, Stacey is not just informative but also entertaining. So it was captivating to hear her discourse about characters. Considering that her strength is in non-fiction and research rather than fiction (about 3 to 1, according to her), there is no question that she masters both sides.

Yes, you are betraying your age if you remember the famous actor who was sucking a lolly pop (hint, he was also bold, when bold was not (yet) fashionable). We talk about Telly Savalas as Kojak of course. Or another one who had a limp and always, just as he was leaving, had 'just another thing' (Peter Falk in Colombo).. In other words, **think of something that is unusual**. "You can use characters even if you are writing your biography" Stacey advised. How detached are you? If you are a man writing about a woman, imagine you interviewing your grandmother... Does she wear lipstick? Is she an outdoor person? And **do not underestimate what sells**: think of Mills & Boon... Steamy romances sell by the million.



As always, there was of course much, much more. Sorry peeps if you missed it. You should have been there!

Competition winners

Our convenor **Grahame Moore** announced the winners of the recent internal competition. First prize went to **Hamed Mirfenderesk** – a haunting story about life in the mountains of Iran. Second prize went to **Rolando Rizzo** – going deep into marital relationship.

With the theme of ‘**Under Stormy Skies**’, there was a broad range of submissions, from horror to thriller to... Children’s books! Yes, **Susan Groundwater** won third prize with her superbly soft story about baby raindrops. (*Talking about character development – see above.* ☺).

New HWG Challenge: “Out of the darkness”

Well, dig out your old Franz Kafka titles! The Trial, Metamorphosis... On the other hand, if you want to write on a brighter note: in my home country, a popular folk song is about the experience of entering a tunnel (in a train) and coming out at the other end: “*wenn me uusechunnt, wird’s hell*” (when you exit, it gets bright). Or anything in-between, stretch it, knead it, knit it into anything that meets the topic, either physically, relating to mental status or metaphorically.

The usual conditions: **Fiction, or “creative non-fiction”** ([click here for definition](#)), **1000 words maximum (including title)**, **deadline is 21st November 2025**, and no late entries accepted. All entries will feature in our Christmas compilation book.

Note: **the title MUST be ‘Out of the Darkness’**. If you want to, you may have a subtitle.

Note 2: **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, it thus does not constitute as “having been published before”.



Christmas Luncheon – Thursday 18th December

Our convenor **Grahame Moore** has again booked the ‘Glass Room’ at **Club Helensvale** (where we were last year), for a buffet luncheon, commencing at 12-Midday. **For registered current members** of the Helensvale Writers Group, **the luncheon is free**, and you are welcome to bring along partners, family or guests, at a cost of \$30.00 per person. Drinks can be purchased at the bar just outside the room. We’ll need to advise firm numbers one week before. Vegetarian options are available. I’ll ask for specifics in early December. For the moment, just put it into your diary!

Competition story compilation, overall winners and trophies: On that occasion, Grahame will again present each one of the authors who have submitted a booklet with a compilation of all the stories received throughout the year. The winners of various categories will be announced, and trophies will be presented.

Upcoming Writers Competitions

- a) The [Bram Stoker Awards](#) – various categories. So you are into Horror? Named, of course, after the author of Dracula, and run by the Horror Writers Association (you do not

need to be a member to submit though). This would (according to their website) be considered the equivalent of the Oscar for dark writing. It's all there, so click on the link for details. Definite deadline is 1st January 2026, but you are encouraged to submit earlier. As a matter of fact, if you submit after 30th November, you go into another category.. **Make sure you read the conditions.** Nothing uncommon, but you need to follow them, otherwise...

- b) Here is a long term project: Deadline is 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...
- c) There are another 280 (last time I looked) competitions on [reedsy.com](#) – There must be one or two that suit you!

Association with Gold Coast Writers Association

I'm printing this article from last month again, as I still got some members seeking clarification. **In a nutshell:** to be part of the Helensvale Writers Group, you need to become a member of the Gold Coast Writers Association. You can subscribe online:

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

There is an online membership application form.

Here are the principal points:

1. The Gold Coast City Council, which rents us the Helensvale meeting room, makes it absolutely clear that we are NOT insured for public liability whilst inside the meeting room.
2. Examples of potential cases:
 - during a somewhat high-spirited (insert your own epithet) discussion, somebody considers him/herself “deeply insulted, abused, slighted, slurred, affronted, attacked...
 - ... or other reasons such as negligence: if somebody were to accidentally spill a cup of hot coffee over somebody, resulting in serious burns... leading to...
3. The prospect of getting sued by an “ambulance chaser” lawyer for anything is very real. Even something quite spurious – imagine any other scenario – after all, you ARE writers!
4. For that reason, our group would need to be incorporated and obtain public liability insurance as an incorporated body. This largely prevents a potential private lawsuit against every member of the group. In any case, it would be a hell of a mess.
5. The Gold Coast Writers Association (GWA) has offered us to come under their umbrella in relation to public liability. All we need to do is for our members to also become members of the GWA. This involves **an annual membership fee of \$40.00 (first year \$45.00)**. A 3-year membership is also available at a very substantial discount. If we were to have our own PL insurance, \$40.00 a head would nowhere near cover it. Not to mention: we'd need a President, Secretary and Treasurer, submit formal returns... *(Looking for volunteers. Hold it! Not all at once! ☹)*
6. **The Helensvale Writers Group will continue to function as it always has:**
 - We remain independent, meeting every third Thursday morning at the Helensvale Library (except for the next one or two meetings whilst they have renovations.
 - The attendance fee will remain at \$10.00 per meeting (we still have to pay the rent, buy coffee, speaker's gifts, pay for the domain registration and website

hosting), Attendees who are not (yet) members of GWA will be offered to sign up then, or pay a small surcharge to cover temporary insurance.

- Of course, you also get all the benefits membership of GWA brings with it: you can attend any of their monthly meetings (\$5.00 discount), participate in their competitions, promote your works, etc. Check out their website:
<https://www.goldcoastwriters.org/>

Can you improve on that?

“You must think me outrageous. Is that it?”

Mr Brundish gave the impression of carefully turning the words over in his mind, as though they were pebbles of which he must ascertain the value.

“I find that I cannot answer either “yes” or “no”. By “outrageous” I take it that you mean “unexpectedly offensive”. Certainly you have been offensive, Mrs Gamart, but you have been exactly as I expected.

Penelope Fitzgerald, ‘The Bookshop’

Got anything to brag about?

Well, let’s hear it! Don’t be shy if you have won an award, or even if your story got published! Your fellow members would like to know about it. Send me an email.

New (temporary) meeting location

This month’s meeting is on the **usual day, third Thursday of the month, 16th October 2025, BUT NOT AT THE LIBRARY:** Due to renovations at the Helensvale Library, we are meeting at the **Helensvale Community Centre**, 31 – 37 Discovery Drive, Helensvale (just a bit further up on Discovery Drive on the right side, opposite Club Helensvale – same as last month. Look for signs. **The meeting will start at 10:15** – Grahame and I will be there at 10:00 am to set up. **Please be a little bit early** so we can start right on time – we need to stack the chairs and tables again be out by 1:00 pm.

Best wishes,
Franz Huber
Helensvale Writers Group
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Therapist: “Anyways...”

Client: “Anyways isn’t a word. You mean anyway.”

Therapist: “Anyway, we were talking about your difficulty making friends...”

