The Write Stuff

https://www.helensvalewritersgroup.org

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – November 2026

This month's guest speaker: Michael Rhodes

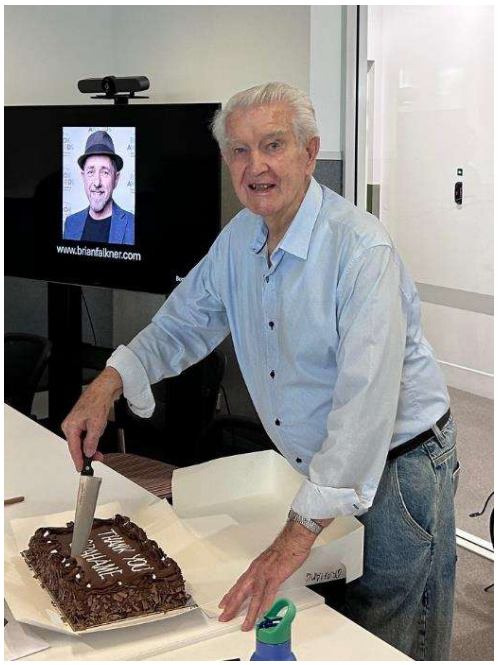


Michael Rhodes is a New Zealand-born author who was educated in Apia, Samoa, and at Wellington College, New Zealand. He migrated to Australia in 1966 and pursued a distinguished legal career spanning the commercial, industrial, agricultural, and entertainment sectors. He also served as Executive Chairman of Scanbox Asia Pacific, based in Los Angeles.

What else will happen? Perhaps a better subtitle would be **"what has happened and what will happen?"** Following the retirement of Grahame Moore as convenor of our group, a steering committee was formed, not only to assign, in principle, who would do what, but how our group was to progress. We had two 'in person' meetings, and an awful lot of phone, text and email discussions in-between.

So, the first hour will be taken up by discussing your responses to our survey, receive further feedback and seek agreement. Note: if you haven't sent your survey back yet, there is still time!

Last month's meeting



It was, of course a very special meeting, with Grahame Moore retiring as Convenor of our group. Ralph Mayn procured a cake to be shared among all of us at the coffee break. Chairing his last meeting, Grahame announced that this year our **Christmas function will be held "inhouse"** at the Northern Room of the Helensvale Community Centre (the complex where we used to meet during the renovations). Partly 'bring your own, including drinks and plate', we'll have some cash left over to supplement any shortfalls. (At this month's meeting we'll also elaborate what we plan to do with the left-over funds, after we have paid for the room hire, the speaker's presents and the competition prizes). Grahame also suggested that the first and second placed 1000 word competition stories be read by their respective authors – to be discussed. *Note: more photos on our Facebook page.*

Last month's guest speaker: Brian Falkner

Brian Falkner is now one of the "regulars" at our group, many of us have known him from previous visits and know that he is very instructive, informative **and** entertaining.

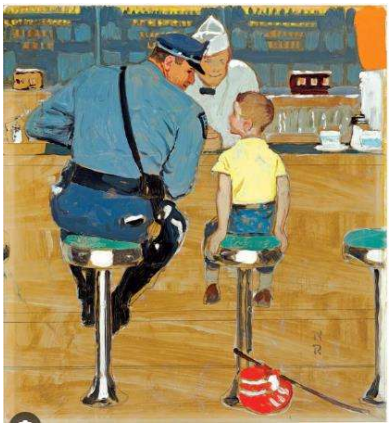


This time, his aim was to explain that success doesn't necessarily hit you from day one. Although published, "the best offer I ever had before was $1,500" he said. His "day-time" job was in software development.

Then he outlined that wonderful experience of his proper break-through: he had met with 6 different publishers in the USA, and he hadn't got anything much better than "we'll let you know" (also known as "don't call us, we'll call you"). As he was at the airport awaiting his return flight to be called, a phone call came in from Random House, offering a six-digit figure for publishing rights...

"Finding the right genre is critical" he advised, "and you must believe in yourself!". After trying various genres, and even screen plays, he settled on young adults', "the academic thriller type". His list of books also features some of the most unlikely (yet very successful) titles. How about **"The most boring book in the world"**? Would you have dared? Then there is a series of spy novels, which he wrote whilst residing in Berlin: the Katipo Joe trilogy. You can reach out to Brian via his website **https://www.brianfalkner.com/** where you can also purchase his books. As always: sorry peeps, you should have been there.

1000 Word Competitions - 4th Quarter theme: 'The Runaway'



Submissions close next Tuesday 10th November, that's just a week away! The winners are to be announced at the Christmas Party, and all authors who submitted even just one story will receive a compilation booklet with all entries of 2026, organised via Grahame's publisher/printer.

Genre: it's OPEN – take your pick, from crime to romance, historical fiction, non-fiction, chick-lit, children's stories, fantasy. Anything!

Note: Under the theme/title 'The Runaway', there are various major artworks, including a TV series, a famous painting (see right), even a Black Hole... By all means, look them up, but only original stories please!

The usual rules apply: **1000 words maximum** (including title), no pictures, no Artificial Intelligence (we'll test). Please submit in **MS Word or Google Doc format**, NOT PDF, to **helensvalewriters@gmail.com**

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) **Next Generation Short Story Awards**: Deadline is 28th January 2027. This is one of the largest book awards in the world for Indie (self-published) authors. **Click here**.
b) 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?

I try to grab at him but I am too far away. I catch the air, and he falls over the edge of the cliff.

He falls so slowly, twisting in a somersault like a rough-cut acrobat, and I hear the rush of the river I heard last night, before there was the beating of his heart in my hand. Thick as breath, I hear his spine hit the rocks and the water below.

After this, everything that has built up inside me spills out. It is nonverbal. It is a chord that comes when a knife cleaves your soul. And only now, with this sound surrounding, does everyone choose to listen. Jodi Picoult – 'Songs of the Humpback Whale'

See you on **Thursday, 19th November 2026. Usual time 10:00 am. Helensvale Library, downstairs meeting room.** Please be a little bit early, so we can start on time.

Best wishes,

Franz Huber
Helensvale Writers Group
helensvalewriters@ gmail.com
0484 597 451

The subtlety of choosing the exact, correct word:

If you invite someone to your cottage in the forest, it sounds nice and cosy. But...

If I invite someone to my hunting cabin in the woods, they are probably going to end up dead.

The only time the word 'incorrectly' isn't spelled 'incorrectly' is when it is spelled incorrectly.

[OK, I'll see myself out... Ed.]

