

The Write Stuff

<https://www.helensvalewritersgroup.org>

Monthly Newsletter of the Helensvale Writers Group – March 2026

This month's Guest Speaker: Karen (Kaz) Keelan



Using Artificial Intelligence without compromising your style of writing

Kaz is one of the committee members of the Gold Coast Writers Association, responsible for Social Media. She is a children's author and budding crime writer who believes stories have the power to connect generations, spark imagination, and create understanding in ways nothing else can. Her presentation at this month's meeting may well touch a "raw point", but let's face it, AI is not going to go away. This is not about plagiarising other authors' work; this is about

using AI as a tool, just like your spell checker, Grammarly or a Text-to-speech program.

Under the Spotlight: Stacey King

Stacey has safely returned from roaming the high seas! This month, she'll demonstrate a new piece of **software** she discovered, which, she assures us, will **authentically change a black and white photo to colour**. Perfect for writers of non-fiction (as she is), history. *[Or people of the age of your editor, who want to pretend that they were born when colour photography had already become mainstream... Ed.]*

Last month's Guest Speaker: Brian Falkner

Brian's presentation primarily concentrated on the framework of writing - the four principal segments:

- **Narration**, where the author tells the reader things they NEED to know, as in Red Ridinghood is a little girl, on the way to see her Grandmother.
- **Description**: This puts the reader INSIDE the story. Bring out the sensory reality, describing the five senses. Importance is on light, smell and taste (as in sweat, dirt. Touch, air temperature. Read a Harry Potter story to get the idea.
- **Dialogue & Action**: This brings the character to life. You can use direct dialogue ("in quotation marks") or indirect, as in 'she said')



- **Inner Thoughts:** Do create empathy, to make the reader care. If he/she doesn't care, why would they continue reading the book?

Another example of his many additional tips: Use little quirks of personality to make a person real. For example, a facial twitch, a limp (remember Columbo?).

In his inimitable, clear way, Brian built on an easily understandable example. Starting off with what was a quite acceptably written paragraph, he then built and built on it, gradually improving, improving, improving... Sorry, peeps, if you weren't there, you missed a great lesson. He is not only a master author but also a master tutor. **Thank you, Brian.**

Last month's Spotlight Speaker: Rolando Rizzo

Rolando consistently reaches the top ranks in our internal competition (he has also written a business development book, that reached the shelves of libraries for some 10 years), so Grahame Moore asked him to elaborate on what his methods would be? Well... there are, of course, the obvious points: How can you make money out of short story writing? discipline (say, 2000 words a day). "If your book must have an element of truth in it", he said, "don't make it up". And be careful: "When you write, you get involved, and you can describe situations you can't get out of..." Rolando also highlighted an interesting organisation: the [Bridport Prize](#)

(Photo above, from left) Brian Falkner, Rolando Rizzo and Ralph Mayn, who chaired the meeting.)

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

- OK, why not look at the [Bridport Prize](#) that Rolando referred to last month? Navigate to their website. One of their competitions (Short Story), carries a first prize of **£5,000 (approx \$AUS 9,450)**. Yes, there might be another couple of competitors in it... 😊
- 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.
- [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
- 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! [Unfamiliar with the acronym? [click here](#). Warning: not for the prudish.]

- e) 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!

Can you improve on that?

Gentleness is not kindness. His fluid personality tested and stole into the weak places of others until it found it could settle down to its own advantage.

Penelope Fitzgerald, 'The Bookshop'

Gold Coast Writers Association Membership

From 1st January 2026, **all our members also need to 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 continue to remain independent, but we are now covered. **But, just as important:** 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:

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.

Position Vacant

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 March. Usual time 10:00 am. Location: at the Helensvale Community Centre**, 31-37 Discovery Dr, Helensvale QLD 4212, where we met the last five months (opposite Club Helensvale). There is a slim chance that renovations at the library may have been completed before. Should this happen, you'll receive an email a couple of days before the meeting.

Best wishes,
 Franz Huber
 Helensvale Writers Group
[helensvalewriters@ gmail.com](mailto:helensvalewriters@gmail.com)
 0484 597 451



By the way: Are you a member of our Facebook group? C'mon, go and have a look. Just search for Helensvale Writers Group. Follow us, or click on the logo on the right!

My teacher told me not to worry about spelling because in the future there will be autocorrect And for that I am eternally grapefruit.

In the restroom at the Uni, I saw a sign that read "THINK" on the mirror above the sink. So I pulled out a marker and wrote "THOAP" above the soap dispenser, to match it up.

OK, I'll see myself out...

