

## My Brother Jack Junior Secondary Poetry Award

I was very happy to be invited to judge the Glen Eira Council My Brother Jack Junior Secondary Poetry competition this year. There were a large number of entries in this category, and it was a great pleasure to read such a vital, energetic and diverse group of poems.

Judging from these entries, Junior Secondary students have a wide range of interests. There were poems about playing and watching sport, about young soldiers and war, poems about sunsets, rainbows and the beauty of nature, favourite fast foods, fighting with siblings and family pets. Other popular topics were monsters, ghosts and ghouls, both 'real' and psychological, and family life with all its joys and frustrations.

While there was much humour and light heartedness in this batch of poems there was also a darker element with heartfelt poems dealing with death, illness and disability, loneliness and the struggle to fit in.

Many young poets felt the need to make their poems rhyme and this was not always to their advantage. In some cases a forced rhyme hampered a poem's readability and rhythm and restricted word choices. I would encourage poets to play with the form and experiment with free verse and other styles. I would also recommend reading the work out aloud to check for rhythm and readability and to proof-read carefully.

Two works are commended this year. Jumping joyfully between an interior voice and external observations, *Tennis* is commended.

Very different in style and content, for its compassionate capture of a tragic moment, *Hoping* is also commended.

For its originality and rhythm second prize goes to *Bath*, a very funny poem written from the point of view of a dirty and reluctant family pet.

And finally, for its lovely images and skillful capture of a quiet domestic moment between a young person and a grandparent, first prize is awarded to *Beans*.

Thanks to all the poets who entered the competition, and of course, their teachers. I hope you all continue to read, write and enjoy poetry and enter again next year.