



PENS *Against* **POVERTY**

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNING ENTRIES



About Pens Against Poverty

The Pens Against Poverty Schools Writing Competition encourages schools, teachers, and students to become educated in the important issues of poverty and homelessness within our communities in Australia, while nurturing brave young voices through creative writing.

This year's theme, **Staying Brave**, attracted hundreds of entries from schools across the country. Anglicare Australia is delighted to announce this year's winners.

Honouring Our Winners

The winning entries will be honoured at this year's Pens Against Poverty Awards Ceremony. Ordinarily held during Anti-Poverty Week, this year's ceremony will be held later this year in Canberra.

THE JACKIE FRENCH SCHOOL AWARD

Winner: **Trinity College**
Blakeview, South Australia

The Jackie French School Award is conferred for high quality writing reflected across all student entries. The award is named in honour of Jackie French, who has been a supporter of Pens Against Poverty since the competition first launched. Jackie's writing career spans 25 years. She is author of 'Walking the Boundaries', 'Diary of a Wombat' and 'Nanberry' and was the Australian National Children's Laureate for 2014 and 2015.

This award is accompanied by a \$500 prize. Anglicare Australia congratulates Trinity College on their outstanding entries this year, and for coordinating 71 unique entries from students.

THE JOHN FOULCHER SCHOOL AWARD

Winner: **Canberra Grammar School**
Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

The John Foulcher School Award is conferred for high quality writing reflected across all student entries. The award is named in honour of Australian poet and teacher John Foulcher, who also has also served as a judge for the Pens Against Poverty competition in previous years. John has written eleven books of poetry, most recently 101 Poems and A Casual Penance. His work has appeared in national magazines and anthologies for over thirty years, and his poetry has been studied as part of the NSW Higher School Certificate syllabus.

This award is accompanied by a \$500 prize. Anglicare Australia congratulates Canberra Grammar School on their outstanding entries this year, and for coordinating 65 unique entries from students.

YEARS 3 AND 4: STORIES

Winner: **Longing for Home**
Sarah Kitzing, Pymble Ladies' College

This is an extract from 'Longing for Home' the winning entry in this category:

The glistening creek reflected the sunlight as fish darted through the water. Yindi plunged her hand into the icy water trying to catch the fish, but the fish were too quick. Children splashed in the water near her when Yindi heard her mum's voice calling for her: dinnertime! Yindi waded out of the water and ran towards the campfire. She could already smell the scent of yummy bush tucker and could hear grandma telling her special stories.

Highly Commended: **Stay Strong, Be Brave**
Grace Butcher, Reddam House Primary School

This is an extract from 'Stay Strong, Be Brave' the highly commended entry in this category:

Beep! Honk! Rusty cars and vans filled the mud covered roads. Angus and Lizzy slept like kittens. They were tired sloths after their long walk through the night to Darwin. They snorted like pigs and snored like bears. The trees waved wildly in the rapid wind. It wouldn't be comfortable, sleeping on the side of the road under a few wooden panels with nothing but a sheet to cover themselves with.

YEARS 3 AND 4: POETRY

Winner: **Longing**
Claire Huang, Pymble Ladies' College

This is an extract from 'Longing' the winning entry in this category:

My longing has turned into hunger,
Turned me into a tangled beast.
A hopeless heap of emotions,
That only someone rejected can feel.

Highly Commended: **Untitled**
Yasmin Harber, Canberra Grammar School

This is an extract from the highly commended entry in this category:

Bravery is when you don't understand,
and when you're scare to put up your hand.
But when you do,
It shows the bravery in you.

YEARS 5 AND 6: STORIES

Winner:

Eye of the Storm
Neve Garden, Canberra Grammar School

This is an extract from 'Eye of the Storm' the winning entry in this category:

Then Mara's eyes flicked to the closing metal door, and she knew. Mikey had gone after Skipper, their beloved dog. He would never leave him behind. Heart racing, Mara dashed up the stairs at the very last moment, squeezing through the crack before the gate slammed shut with a heavy, final click.

Highly Commended:

The Hospital Visit
Aaheli Choudhary, Canberra Grammar School

This is an extract from 'The Hospital Visit' the highly commended entry in this category:

The cold tiles of the clinic cooled my splintered palm. The air smelt of lavender and tired hope, a scent they probably chose on purpose. My baby's tiny fingers curled around my sleeve; I held him closer to my chest, hiding my nerves.

YEARS 5 AND 6: POETRY

Winner:

A Match in The Dark
Risha Arya, Canberra Grammar School

This is an extract from 'A Match in The Dark' the winning entry in this category:

Darkness swallows the waiting shores
No light
No voice
No choice

Highly Commended:

When Hands Meet
Jing Huang, Pymble Ladies' College

This is an extract from 'When Hands Meet' the highly commended entry in this category:

A car creeps by,
headlights melting eyes.
Gas crowds out of its purring engine,
Polluting the world in viscous
Dreariness.

YEARS 7 AND 8: STORIES

Winner:

Untitled
Florence Willoughby, Woodcroft College

This is an extract from the winning entry in this category:

The days feel like they stretch out forever. Every single moment feels like years, almost an eternity. I find it hard to believe that today is the 17th of September 2025, and the day before my 18th birthday. It's hard to think about celebrating such a huge milestone when we are hiding in a bunker.

Highly Commended:

Untitled
Nabhya Gautam, Oakhill College

This is an extract from the highly commended entry in this category:

Now, on the eve of the Banishment—the one night in two millennia when all creatures possessed by the Charred Spirit would be cast from this world—the werewolves had chosen to strike. Panic swept the villagers. The Banishment would begin in twenty minutes. The guards, the only ones capable of fending off the wolves, were on the far side of the village. The ceremony would be defenseless.

YEARS 7 AND 8: POETRY

Winner:

HUNGER AND HOPE
Manyang Manyang, Trinity College

This is an extract from 'HUNGER AND HOPE' the winning entry in this category:

The blankets thin, the night is deep,
I promise her I'll guard her sleep.
Her little hand curl into mine,
I whisper soft, "We'll be just fine."

Highly Commended:

The Quietest Heroes
Gurnoor Bhinder, Trinity College

This is an extract from 'When Hands Meet' the highly commended entry in this category:

The roof leaks softly in the night, A whisper, not a scream or fight.
The walls are thin, the blankets torn But still, they wake to face the dawn.
No medals hang, no crowds applaud, Just quiet strength and shoes that plod.
Bravery isn't loud or pristine
It's holding on with trembling hands.

YEARS 9 AND 10: STORIES

Winner: **The Weight of Shadows**
Taranpreet Grover, Trinity College

This is an extract from 'The Weight of Shadows' the winning entry in this category:

The rain fell like a relentless curse, drenching the streets of Eldridge Hollow in a grey gloom. The air was thick with dampness and decay, wrapping the dilapidated buildings in despair. In one such crumbling tenement lived thirteen-year-old Lena, her spirit flickering like a dying candle in an unforgiving world.

Highly Commended: **Untitled**
Zoe Percival, St John's College

This is an extract from the highly commended entry in this category:

I plant my feet together at the edge of the mat, my shoulders pressed back, lifting both arms so my fingers are straight, palms angled. I give them a small nod before stepping towards the middle of the mat to begin my floor routine.

YEARS 9 AND 10: POETRY

Winner: **Nothing Left But Nerve**
Leo Bateman, Trinity College

This is an extract from 'Nothing Left But Nerve' the winning entry in this category:

Brave is not the word I'd use
but it's what people say
when they toss coins in my paper cup
eyes already sliding away
like I'm a crack in the concrete
they forgot how to fix.

Highly Commended: **Why Hate Love?**
Kaelin Marett-Guest, Trinity College

This is an extract from 'Why Hate Love?' the highly commended entry in this category:

Love is never a crime,
So why is it criminalised?
Replacing their pride with prejudice,
Revoking their right to bloom,
A garden fenced by barbed wires,
Of which they did not choose.