



THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

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Finalists with Gail, front and centre

Poetry Cup dazzles Nimbin

Nimbin's 11th Performance Poetry World Cup champions have been appointed.

Winner of the \$1000 first prize was Darkwing Dub, a five-time finalist, with his poem that surveyed the use of statistics in fear campaigns.

People's Choice winner of \$500 was 20-something poet Rachel Calleja, who came from Sydney with a group of young performance poets, three of whom made the finals.

Rachel's winning poem, concerning being judged by your postcode – in her case 2770, Mount Druitt – obviously struck a chord with the 248 audience members who voted.

NPPWC co-ordinator Gail M. Clarke was impressed by the standard of the performances by all 40 entrants, and by their diversity of ages and subject matter.

"We had quite a lot of poets we hadn't heard of before, including some first-timers, and several commented afterwards that now they have a better idea of what they're doing, and will definitely be coming back to

perform next year," she said.

Some 250 people attended the Grand Final night where, in between competitors, guest spots by 2012 winner and finals co-judge Candy Royale and a Tuntable Falls school class, who performed Lewis Carroll's 'Jaberwocky', were warmly applauded.

Apart from Darkwing Dub, the finalists were: Stefanie Petrik, Thomas Keily, Irish Joe, Possum and Tango, the only duo performance, and Sydney wunderkinds Zohab Zee Khan, Ahmed Al Rady and Lorin Reid.

Notably missing from the finals were seasoned (and somewhat senior) previous Cup winners Tug Dumbly, David Hallett and Elizabeth Routledge, all knocked out in the semi-finals, where 18 poets were cruelly winnowed down to eight.

There were plenty of first-time performance poetry audience members too, among the 600 people who attended the two-day event, as well as escapees from the Byron Writers Festival – which changed its September weekend date to conflict with the NPPWC – and odds are that they'll be back, too.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Preference deals make strange bedfellows

by Bob Dooley

The NSW Senate ballot paper in the federal election on 7th September is likely to be over a metre wide.

Although the actual number of candidates will not be known until registration closes at noon on Thursday August 15th, 54 political parties have been registered – including the Pirate Party and the Coke in the Bubbles Party – and all major parties are preparing for the impact of a "tablecloth" ballot paper.

Because the paper's size is limited by statute, the Australian Electoral Commission is facing the prospect of having to reduce the point size of the names of the expected hundreds of candidates to such an extent that for the first time, it is planning to make magnifying glasses available for voters' use in polling booths.

NSW Greens lead senate candidate Cate Faehrmann said that this is likely to result in most people opting to vote 1 above the line, leaving the distribution of preferences to each group's submitted list.

"That is why everybody is having talks about preferences at the moment, and why they're particularly important at this election," she said when she visited the North Coast in July.

Senate elections are based on proportional representation, so that if a candidate fails to make a set quota, all of his or her votes are allocated to the voter's next-most preferred candidate, and the process repeated until some candidate reaches the quota.

While most groups select like-minded candidates to swap preferences with, some party strategists preference oppositional candidates to keep their closest competitors out, which has led to some unintended outcomes in the past.

An interesting case study this time round is the HEMP party, which is running two Senate candidates in each state. It has a poor record on preferences: in 2004, before it was de-registered in a



Rick Nease 2007

rule change, HEMP swapped preferences with the centre-right Liberals for Forests party; this year they have been courted by the Shooters and Fishers party, which opposes what it calls "extreme Green policies" and the "left leaning social reconstructive agenda" of The Greens.

The news was anathema to the NSW Greens, especially since MLA Ian Cohen's introduction of a bill to decriminalise cannabis into the NSW upper house in 2003 was torpedoed by the Shooters and Fishers Party.

Of all the parties holding parliamentary seats, The Greens have the most cannabis-friendly drugs policy, leaving HEMP with the problem of differentiating itself as a worthy alternative and converting Greens voters to a single-issue party.

For a couple of weeks, the HEMP party was coy about confirming details of any HEMP preference deals to members, preferring instead to go into attack mode

in their exclusively web-based campaign material.

HEMP national campaign director James Moylan enjoyed the trumpet-blowing for a while: "Greens preferences have already elected a Shooters and Fishers politician to office in Western Australia and their preferences almost got a Family First senator elected" ...and... "If The Greens want our preferences they will have to get behind cannabis law reform in Australia. Currently The Greens are part of the problem – not the solution."

On the party's 'Hemp Hour' radio programme on Nim-FM, president Michael Balderstone said, "There's always a lot of argy-bargy over preferences in the lead-up to an election. Everyone talks to everyone. Nothing's set in concrete until the preferences are lodged with the AEC."

The studio erupted in argument between the guests, which was followed by 20 minutes of music. In the following week's programme, compere Bob Tissot banned any mention of preferences.

In the wake of howls of disapproval about secretive preference deals (see Letters page), James Moylan finally issued a clarification at the start of August:

"HEMP preferences will go directly and first to Wiki and the SEX Party and then to other small but progressive parties before going to the ALP or the Greens.

"In every state, HEMP will be preferencing the ALP then the Greens – or the Greens then the ALP – before the shooters. HEMP preferences will not assist the Shooters and Fishers in any way."

The final date for Senate candidates and parties to lodge preferences is 15th August, and they will be published by the AEC on its website www.aec.gov.au and in all polling places before early voting commences on 20th August.

All voters should acquaint themselves with their preferred party's preference list before they vote 1 above the line. Or good luck with the 6 point text below the line.



DAWN WALKER
FOR RICHMOND

VOTE GREEN TO STOP CSG!

YOU CAN'T TRUST THE OLD PARTIES



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DESLEY BANKS
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