

OutStanding LGBTIQ+ Short Story Competition

Judges Report 2019

Judges: Sophie Robinson, Robert Tait, Gail Hewison

Robert Tait

The OutStanding Short Story Competition has two main aims: wide participation by the Australian queer community and the promotion of excellence in creative writing. The aims aren't always a natural fit, but when they do come together, and a writer tells her, his or their unique story in the only communal space available, and does the job skilfully, then a kind of magic happens. Again, this year the eight winning stories exhibit that perfect conjunction of experience and expression, and so provide a touching, funny, incisive snapshot of where we are as a community in 2019.

Every year is different. Only a couple of years ago there was a good proportion of marriage equality stories — now characters casually refer to their wives or husbands but that's about it. A principal theme this year was the ongoing fight against prejudice, and not only from society generally but family, friends, even within the community, from one group towards another. And we had more love stories than usual, some unrequited but lots ending blissfully. It seems we still have a good way to go to achieve an equal expectation of happiness, but that's something that's definitely becoming clearer and brighter.

Gail Hewison

At the outset I'd like to say, from the judges...it breaks our collective hearts to only be able to give 8 prizes! At our first meeting after judging began, we each came up with a short list of 10, all different. So, we had 30 stories all possible winners. Much more reading and rereading to come up with our final list.

Altogether we received 117 stories, about the same as usual, with a number of writers sending in more than one.

We always hope for diversity to truly reflect our wider community, and were pleased that stories came in from all States, age groups, and all aspects of LGBTIQ+.

The standard of writing was impressive and seems to improve every year. Every writer displayed originality and imagination in addressing the theme of Over The Top, and had a good story to tell.

Falling in love followed by disappointment, successful and not so happy coming out stories, gay cops, sci-fi, climate change, gender confusion, crushes, funerals, sudden deaths, and dealing with loss...were just some of the themes which moved us to laughter, tears, or amazement at the brilliance of our community stories and experiences.

Winning stories generally flowed well from beginning to end, opened and closed with impact, and made us want to know more about the characters. We were looking for the wow factor and the awarded stories all fitted the bill.

We appreciate all who participate especially those who keep coming back every year. We congratulate ALL the writers who entered, you are all winners to us! Please keep coming back!

Sophie Robinson

It is always a privilege to be asked to guest judge this competition. 2019 proved to be an eclectic year of stories and creative takes on the competition theme.

There were also some very acute themes coming through, stories of climate change, the worlds end and alternative ways of living, something that is foremost in our minds.

I thank all of those who submitted their creative work, which is always a daring thing to do. I appreciated the effort behind all the stories, and I thank my fellow judges for being so wonderful to work with and such advocates of our community.

Our congratulations to the 8 Winning writers, your stories were standouts in another exceptional year.

Gail, Robert and Sophie.