The Gippsland Writers Network summer ‘Heat’ writing competition attracted entries from around Victoria and interstate. This is the second competition GWN has run, but the first time poetry has been included. We saw a significant rise in stories submitted and it was pleasing that the poetry competition was competitive, with a wide range of styles and themes.

Judges used a scoring template giving consideration to grammar and spelling, the theme, as well as creative writing elements of voice, tone and the all important ‘X factor’ that lifts an entry above its competitors. The winning and highly commended entries stood out for their originality, style and word choice.

Most writers used the theme of ‘heat’ well, immersing the reader in tales of summer, drought, humidity. In a few instances, however, the theme was somewhat stretched or seemed like an afterthought. Those entries fell short in the scoring. Overall, the majority of submissions were well crafted and it was a pleasure to read them.

Congratulations to the following writers:

**Short story**

Winner: Rob Johnson for ‘Evaporate’

*Comments:*

A lyrical and bittersweet tale told in second person, difficult to pull off. Great word choice and the motif of the tea throughout was well done.

I really appreciate the author’s style and was completely drawn in. I like the simpleness of the story. I enjoyed the dialogue, and I’m a huge fan of repetition, and it was used really well here.

Highly commended: Emma Rennison for ‘Dawn’

*Comments:*

A strong, compelling narrative set in a dystopian cli-fi world. This story is well drawn and pacy with a hopeful ending.

This was tightly written and a unique take on this theme. It ends on a positive note. We know something has happened but we don’t need to know what or why for this to work.

Highly commended: Belinda Oliver for ‘Sunflowers’

*Comments:*

An unusual love story that sees the widow’s dead husband predict her future. It may be better served as a longer story to allow for more tension in the narrative.

Very nice. The theme felt incidental to the story, though then I thought a little more about the ashes.
This was cute and sad and still managed to finish on a positive.

**Poetry**

Winner: Sasanki Tennakoon for ‘Unravelling’

Highly commended: Angela Costi for ‘The Candle Flickers to my Left’ and Diana Harley for ‘Entombed’

*Comments:*

These poems scored highly for the primary attributes of: X factor; style and flow; story/message; and having no jarring words or punctuation, as well as relevance to topic and aesthetics.

The winners receive a $100 Booktopia voucher and a certificate, and the highly commended entrants receive a certificate.

Winning entries can be found on [www.gippslandwritersnetwork.com.au](http://www.gippslandwritersnetwork.com.au)