

THE AUSTRALIA TIMES®  
POETRY

A photograph of a tropical lagoon. In the foreground, the water is a clear, vibrant turquoise color. A white boat with a tall mast is anchored in the middle ground. In the background, there is a lush, green island with dense vegetation and a white sandy beach. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

*Fairfax  
Island Lagoon*

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# Exploring **POETRY** ?

## **COWBOY POETRY & AUSTRALIAN BUSH POETRY**

Cowboy poetry and Australian bush poetry came to life around the campfires where cowboys/stockmen would entertain each other reciting poetry and yarns that usually related to the work they did every day or the area where they lived and worked. The poetic forms were added to aid their memory of the event.

Contrary to popular belief cowboy poetry does not have to be written by a cowboy any more

than Australian bush poetry has to be written by someone who lives in the bush/outback – it can be and is written by people who have a 'handle' or a perspective on country life. People are sometimes surprised to hear this form of poetry written with a modern day perspective. Let's face it though things have changed, so the poets of today are more likely to write of things that are current in the country areas than what their forbears did. Contemporary





cowboy and bush poetry is still being written and performed today, and continues to entertain visitors from near and far at Poet's breakfast meetings, around camp fires in caravan parks and country music masters and in convention halls. It has a dedicated following.

Free verse poetry is uncommon in this genre of poetry - one argument being that cowboy poetry is meant to be recited and should "sound like poetry." The same could be said for bush poetry but the aim there is a little more structured in that by definition Australian Bush Poetry is metered and rhymed poetry about Australia, Australians and the Australian way of life. Poetry that is recited has more leeway but for competition work this is a requirement. The counter-argument runs that imposing a particular structure on cowboy and bush poetry moves the focus away from the subject matter.

Baxter Black, Bruce Kiskaaddon and Red Steagall would be perhaps the most widely recognized contemporary Cowboy poets today but of course

there are many. Most Australians are at least familiar with work by Banjo Paterson, C J Dennis and Henry Lawson and many are aware of Murray Hartin and Rupert McCall. The United States and Canada have annual 'roundups' dedicated to Cowboy Poetry and hold a Cowboy Poetry Week in April each year. Australia has similar events and festivals and competitions year round right across the country.

The lyrics of modern Country and Western music is basically just cowboy/bush poetry set to music and as many of our poets are also great lyricists and some are also musicians, it stands to reason the three genres would amalgamate. Here's a selection of works for your enjoyment including a video clip of the TAT Poetry Magazine's favourite cowboy - Mike Moutoux from New Mexico (that's him in the photo) reciting his poem 'I wish everyone could be a Cowboy' and one from Baxter Black ... The Cowboy Poet as well as our own Rupert McCall performing his work at the 2013 Anzac Day dawn service at Redcliffe Queensland which just happens to be where I spent my teenage years.



**I WISH EVERYONE COULD BE A COWBOY**

Mike Moutoux

[I Wish Everyone Could Be a Cowboy](#)

[Salesman's Dilemma](#)



**C2C**  
Baxter Black



**ANZAC DAY**  
Rupert McCall

[Redcliffe Anzac Day](#)