

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION (NSW)
AWARD**

Winner

Jack Burnham

Caloundra Christian College
CALOUNDRA QLD

Lost and Found

July evening in Ikebukuro
Spartan simplicity of sushi bars overshadowed
By the salty allure of fast food franchises.
The tinny tinkle of karaoke harmonises
With the dull underfoot rumbling
Of trains navigating their subterranean maze.
Wrapped in humidity's blanket
I stand – an immovable object
Buffeted by the milling throng.
Head and shoulders above the stream
A craggy atoll rising above an ocean
Of students and businessmen flowing past
Caught in the lure of an unseen siren current.
I am lost – adrift – astray
Stranger in a strange land
Bereft of compass and sextant
Unable to find my way.
As self control threatens to slip
And hot tears prick swollen eyelids
I feel a gentle tap on the shoulder.
Lifeline thrown by a total stranger,
“May I be of assistance?”

December evening in Mooloolaba
Designer surf stores and juice bars
Jostle for space on the busy esplanade.
The thunder and crash of surf a counterpoint
To the hum of myriad conversations
Punctuated by sudden arpeggio of laughter.
Energated by summer's heat
I sprawl – indolent, content
Passively observing the passing parade
That swirls round and past a frozen figure.
Defeat and terror ooze from every pore
Tourist map clutched convulsively
Between white knuckled fists,
Eyes that beg – beseech - implore.
I am roused from lethargy by a quiver of
recognition
Having owned that fear, known that trepidation.
The bond of kinship connects us,
Blood calls to blood
No stranger this - my brother under the skin.
An invisible cord reels me closer step by step
Until I gently tap his shoulder and bow,
“Hajime Mashite”.

Judges' Comment:

Lovely in true Burnham style.

The poetic style draws the reader into the narrative. The judges commented on the commonality of experience; helplessness, assistance and relief; woven across time, place and culture.