

## CENTENERY OF CANBERRA AWARD

Jack Burnham

### Runner Up

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CALOUNDRA QLD

### Kambarra!

Day dawns over the forest primeval  
Fragrant zephyrs caress the granite shoulders  
Of the lofty Brindabellas before  
Rippling through grassy valleys  
Cupped in the mountains' stony embrace.  
Eucalypts stretch towards the sky as  
Banksia gowned in colours bright  
Turn faces to the morning light.  
The silver ribbon of the Molonglo meanders  
languidly  
Merging and melding with cheerful gurgling creeks  
Leaving swampy reminders of their passing.  
Kambarra! Meeting place of rivers.

Fire cavorts and capers, leaping skyward  
Insatiable hunger checked by barricades of stone.  
Bullroarer whines and calls dancers  
Who slip from the sheltering arms of night  
Pulled inexorably toward the light  
By the rhythmic click of clap sticks.

Didgeridoo thrums and throbs  
Matching heartbeats in perfect synchronicity.  
Voices rise in counterpoint, chanting celebration.  
Rainbow serpent encircles the land  
Turning ancient eyes towards her people.  
Kambarra! Meeting place of tribes.

Buildings radiate from a central watery axis  
Lining the spokes of an architectural wheel -  
Burley Griffin's dream of planned perfection.  
Mighty Molonglo tamed and dammed  
Forms a serene centrepiece,  
Its mirrored perfection broken by a handful of isles.  
Across the lake in lofty halls  
The voice of power rises and falls  
Spouting political rhetoric.  
Museums and memorials rub shoulders  
With Embassies and Consulates.  
Kambarra! Meeting place of nations.

### *Judges' Comment:*

*This poem, too, displays a sophisticated poetic sensibility as two cultures, millenia apart, are cleverly contrasted. While the language here is a little more consciously 'poetic' than in the winning poem, Jack still enables the reader to imagine, even feel, the pristine lifestyle of the past. Repetition is used to good effect. Fine effort, and an equally deserving runner-up.*