To rhyme is not a crime, yet…

by Bob Dooley

Jot down some poetry and perform it within an eight-minute timeframe – how hard can that be?

Thirty-six competitors gave it a go at the Nimbin Performance Poetry World Cup on the first weekend in August, travelling from as far as South Australia, Melbourne and Sydney to try their luck against a strong field of local poets for a prize pool totalling $5000.

Turns out, it's harder than it looks.

Throughout the heats, good audiences of 80-100 were moved to tears, to gales of belly-laughs, to moments of introspection even, and generously applauded the artistry of the contestants.

The eight finalists were Rachel Calleja, Lorrin Elizabeth, Irish Joe Lynch, Nigel Ford, Rebecca Rushbrook, Catherine Stewart, Len Martin and David Hallett.

They gave it their all to a packed Town Hall in the Grand Final, scrutinised by the judging panel: Christine Strelan, Diana Anaid and Akmal Saleh; all well-versed in writing and performing.

The grand prize, a big shiny cup and $2000, was won by Rebecca Rushbrook for her suite of poems about the life-changing

Rebecca Rushbrook

experiences of motherhood, while the $500 People's Choice Award was won by Tug Dumbly for his performance of a single long-form satirical poem, full of wry social and political commentary.

Organiser Gail M. Clarke said, "Again, we had another amazing talented group visiting Nimbin for a great weekend of performance poetry."

The Nimbin Performance Poetry World Cup, now in its 12th year, just gets bigger and better each year. Put it on your bucket list for 2015.

Reclaim the rail, town by town

by Garth Kindred

This is the new motto for people wanting trains to return to our tracks. Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG) and Trains On Our Tracks (TOOT) agree a staged approach is required – the tracks can be repaired and the line re-opened, section by section. NRRAG's focus is on the Casino-Lismore section, while TOOT is more active towards the coast.

Things seem to be moving along nicely in Byron Bay and there will soon be a rail shuttle operating between the town and Byron Beach Resort. Mayor Simon Richardson recently hosted a 'Critical Conversations' forum at the Community Centre.

The packed room heard several enthusiastic proposals for establishing tourist-based operations utilising the tracks. These included the rail shuttle; another light rail/tram proposal; and ultra-light rail projects with self-drive rail cars (rail cruising) and peddled buggies (rail explorers). All agreed that rail trails could run alongside the tracks.

The obvious next step is to hold a community forum looking at integrated transport solutions, innovative enterprises and rail plans that preserve the infrastructure. NRRAG will organise the event and invite all political parties, not just the Greens, who are now the only party to be standing up for rail transport.

The member for Lismore, Thomas George, has announced his intention to stand again. He is now a proponent for rail trails. Train supporters need to hold him to account and remind him of his commitment to trains at the last election. Please give him a call or send him an email and let him know you still want the trains back. While you're at it, tell councillor Isaac Smith, who is Labor's candidate for the seat of Lismore.

TOOT's latest petition has 2000 signatures and rising. and NRRAG is still circulating its petition. Please add your signature to the petitions and support the campaign to get trains back on our tracks.

If you'd like a petition email: kindred@nrg.com.au

Track and trail can co-exist

A leaked report from Infrastructure Australia recently printed in The Guardian highlighted the fact that Aussies are addicted to roads.

Over the years money has been taken out of public transport funding for rail and channelled into road construction and the pockets of private contractors.

Imagine how many cars we could get off the roads if we had an efficient integrated transport system, with regular commuter trains connecting with local shuttle buses.

Visit NRRAG's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/nrrag