

# TOWNSVILLE EISTEDDFOD BUSH POETRY SET POEM 2026

AGE 14 TO 18

## Tangmalangmaloo by John O'Brien

The bishop sat in lordly state and purple cap sublime,  
And galvanized the old bush church at Confirmation  
time;  
And all the kids were mustered up from fifty miles around,  
With Sunday clothes, and staring eyes, and ignorance  
profound.  
Now was it fate, or was it grace, whereby they yarded  
too  
An overgrown two-storey lad from Tangmalangmaloo?

A hefty son of virgin soil, where nature has had her fling,  
And grows the trefoil three feet high and mats it in the  
spring;  
Where mighty hills uplift their heads to pierce the welkin's  
rim,  
And trees sprout up a hundred feet before they shoot a  
limb;  
There everything is big and grand, and men are giants  
too -  
But Christian Knowledge wilts, alas, at  
Tangmalangmaloo.

The bishop summed the youngsters up, as bishops only  
can;  
He cast a searching glance around, then fixed upon his  
man.  
But glum and dumb and undismayed through every bout  
he sat;  
He seemed to think that he was there, but wasn't sure of  
that.  
The bishop gave a scornful look, as bishops sometimes  
do,  
And glared right through the pagan in from  
Tangmalangmaloo.

"Come, tell me, boy," his lordship said, in crushing tones  
severe,  
"Come, tell me why is Christmas Day the greatest of the  
year?  
"How is it that around the world we celebrate that day  
"And send a name upon a card to those who're far  
away?  
"Why is it wandering ones return with smiles and greetings,  
too?"  
A squall of knowledge hit the lad from  
Tangmalangmaloo.

He gave a lurch which set a-shake the vases on the shelf,  
He knocked the benches all askew, up-ending of himself.  
And oh, how pleased his lordship was, and how he smiled  
to say,  
"That's good, my boy. Come, tell me now; and what is  
Christmas Day?"  
The ready answer bared a fact no bishop ever knew -  
"It's the day before the races out at Tangmalangmaloo

OR

## A Bush Christening by A B Paterson

On the outer Barcoo where the churches are few,  
And men of religion are scanty,  
On a road never cross'd 'cept by folk that are lost,  
One Michael Magee had a shanty.

Now this Mike was the dad of a ten-year-old lad,  
Plump, healthy, and stoutly conditioned;  
He was strong as the best, but poor Mike had no rest  
For the youngster had never been christened.

And his wife used to cry, 'If the darlin' should die  
Saint Peter would not recognise him.'  
But by luck he survived till a preacher arrived,  
Who agreed straightaway to baptise him.

Now the artful young rogue, while they held their  
collogue,  
With his ear to the keyhole was listenin',  
And he muttered in fright, while his features turned white,  
'What the divil and all is this christenin'?'  
'

He was none of your dolts, He had seen them brand colts,  
And it seemed to his small understanding,  
If the man in the frock made him one of the flock,  
It must mean something very like branding.

So away with a rush he set off for the bush,  
While the tears in his eyelids they glistened,  
'Tis outrageous,' says he, 'to brand youngsters like me;  
I'll be dashed if I'll stop to be christened!'

Like a young native dog he ran into a log,  
And his father with language uncivil,  
Never heeding the 'praste' cried aloud in his haste,  
'Come out and be christened, you divil!'

But he lay there as snug as a bug in a rug,  
And his parents in vain might reprove him,  
Till his reverence spoke (he was fond of a joke)  
'I've a notion,' says he, 'that'll move him.'

'Poke a stick up the log, give the spalpeen a prog;  
Poke him aisy, don't hurt him or maim him,  
'Tis not long that he'll stand, I've the water at hand,  
As he rushes out this end I'll name him.

'Here he comes, and for shame! ye've forgotten the  
name —

Is it Patsy or Michael or Dinnis?'

Here the youngster ran out, and the priest gave a shout —  
'Take your chance, anyhow, wid 'Maginnis!'

# TOWNSVILLE EISTEDDFOD BUSH POETRY SET POEM 2026

AGE 11 TO 13

## The Legend of Dingo Creek by Carmel Randle

There are tales we tell in daylight hours,  
And tales we tell at night.  
There are campfire tales that some folk tell  
Designed to scare - - and fright!  
But I heard a tale of Opal Fire - -  
A tale that few can speak - -  
Of a ghost that haunts the mesa scarps  
Along by Dingo Creek.

Two brothers found the Opal there ...  
Two brothers shifted soil...  
Two brothers sold the precious gem - -  
Two brothers shared the spoil,  
But greed can sour a friendship, and  
Put murder in a heart...  
The greed for glowing Opal tore  
Two brothers' lives apart!

The elder wandered off alone,  
Found Opal - - stored his find.  
The younger one pretended that  
He didn't know OR mind!  
Then, one dark night, the Min Min light  
Came floating near the creek...  
Both brothers saw - - - and recognised - - -  
But neither one can speak!

The younger thought he'd follow, and  
Thus solved the mystery - - -  
What caused that fickle Min Min glow?  
His chance was not to be,  
For, following the light, he stumbled  
On his brother's store,  
And, from that night, the younger one  
Was seen alive no more!

The older brother blamed the Min Min - -  
Said its evil power  
Lured his brother to his death  
Around the midnight hour,  
But miners south of Winton town  
Are sometimes heard to speak  
That the Min Min wears an Opal glow  
Out there at Dingo Creek

## The Bunyip at Large by Graham Dean

In the deep murky river,  
By the shadow of a tree  
Lies a grand and lonely Bunyip  
By the name of Tak Tak Nee.  
By the darkness of the evening  
Tak Tak Nee would sometimes swim  
Through the dank and brackish water,  
That was really home to him.  
Tak Tak Nee would hunt the fishes  
That had lasted through the drought.  
But the rains were late in coming,  
And his time was running out.

The big billabong was drying  
And as the water disappeared,  
Tak Tak Nee just sat there sighing - -  
This was one thing that he feared.  
Now he'd have to hunt the cattle  
As they came to sate their thirst.  
Tak Tak Nee was set to battle - -  
He would fight the big bull first,  
But that bull was quite gigantic,  
And his horns were long and sharp.  
Tak Tak Nee was getting frantic - -  
He'd prefer to chase the Carp.

Now Tak Tak Nee was not a coward,  
But he was pretty blooming near!  
And 'tho his arms were muscle powered,  
Tak Tak knew the taste of fear.  
Now that bull was getting nearer,  
And as he saw the size of him,  
Tak Tak's mind was growing clearer,  
And he chose instead to swim!  
So now Tak Tak lies there waiting,  
'Neath the water black and sweet - -  
He is....waiting - - simply waiting - -  
For a human he can eat!

# TOWNSVILLE EISTEDDFOD BUSH POETRY SET POEM 2026

Age 10 & under

## Benjamin Bandicoot by AB Patterson

If you walk in the bush at night,  
In the wonderful silence deep,  
By the flickering lantern light  
When the birds are all asleep  
You may catch a sight of old Skinny-go-root,  
Otherwise Benjamin Bandicoot.

With a snout that can delve and dig,  
With claws that are strong as steel,  
He roots like a pigmy pig  
To get his evening meal,  
For creeping creatures and worms and roots  
Are highly relished by bandicoots.

Under the grass and the fern  
He fashions his beaten track  
With many a twist and turn  
That wanders and doubles back,  
And dogs that think they are most astute  
Are baffled by Benjamin Bandicoot.

In the depth of the darkest night,  
Without a star in the sky,  
He'll come to look at a light,  
And scientists wonder why:  
If the bush is burning it's time to scoot  
Is the notion of Benjamin Bandicoot.

**OR**

## Mr Smith By D H Souter

"Mr. Smith of Tallabung  
Has very wicked ways.  
He wanders off into the bush  
And stays away for days.

He never says he's going;  
We only know he's gone.  
There's lots of cats like Mr. Smith  
Who like to walk alone.

He plays that he's a tiger,  
And makes the dingoes run.  
He scratches emus on the legs  
And plays at football with their eggs;  
But does it all in fun.

And then, one day, he's home again,  
The skin all off his nose,  
His ears all torn and tattered,  
His face and bruised and battered,  
And bindies in his toes.

He wanders round and finds a place  
To sleep in the sun,  
And dream of all the wicked things  
That he has been and done.

Mr. Smith of Tallabung  
May be a bad cat;  
But everybody likes him-  
So that's just that."