

## NEWS

**TELL YOUR STORY COMPETITION** All the winners announced

# Young writers impress judges with tales

**Matt Watson**

THE young writers of Bathurst have displayed heart, humour and honesty to impress the judges of a local story competition.

The Neighbourhood Centre's Youth Volunteer Program ran the school holiday Tell Your Story competition and winners and highly commended recipients were announced at an informal ceremony recently.

Olive Hewson was the comic entry winner for her story *Spelling Bee* and the written entry winners were Lucy Drum (*Lucy's Story*) for the eight to 12 years category; Emily Bennett (*Trust*) for 13 to 16 years; and Isabelle Baird (*Broken*) for 17 to 24 years.

Isabelle said her story - "about a girl who experiences a lot of mental health issues" - was written quickly.

"Our teacher gave us a word and the word was 'broken' and I had to write a story in 10 minutes about it and that's basically how I got to here," she said.

She said the story was written in class and then later edited so it could be used in the competition.

Isabelle said she likes to write "as a way to express myself at the moment".

Emily said her story was about her running a race and testing her abilities.

"That's one of my biggest passions - running," she said. "It's the first thing I thought of [as an idea for a story]."

She said she likes writing and making up stories: "I find that fun."

Lucy said her story was about an incident, when her littlest sister was born, when

one of her dad's friends came to the house in the night and she initially thought he was a robber.

"It's from one of my life experiences," she said.

Olive, meanwhile, said her comic entry winner was about a girl in a spelling bee who is unsure of whether

she is meant to spell "there", "their" or "they're".

When the teacher gives an example of how the word is spelt - "their boat sank in the storm" - the girl is focused only on the sadness of the boat sinking.

In terms of the winning entries, the judges said they

were impressed by Olive's use of framing shots and humour; the tension-building and satisfying resolution in Lucy's story; the highly personal nature and excellent structure of Emily's story; and Isabelle's "raw, honest and emotive" story.

The Neighbourhood Centre's service manager Therese Short said she wanted to thank the competition's selection panel, which was made up of the centre's youth volunteers and local authors and artists A.K. Gallagher, David Stanley and Judith Murphy.

Awards and prizes were also given to highly commended recipients, and randomly drawn prizes were given for participation, thanks to sponsors Books Plus and Big W and anonymous donors.

Ms Short said the Neighbourhood Centre wanted "to thank and acknowledge the vulnerability of some of the writers, often who were telling their story for the first time". She said the winners demonstrated great technical and storytelling skills.



Story competition winners Olive Hewson, Lucy Drum, Isabelle Baird and Emily Bennett.