



Poetry Reading

100 Years of Francis Webb - Tribute Reading

Wednesday 25th June, 4-6PM

Hosted by Dr Jennifer Harrison and Toby Davidson



Hello from The Dax Centre & SANE Australia Team!

We are delighted to invite you to our upcoming poetry reading in tribute to Francis Webb.

Event: Poetry Reading: - 100 Years of Francis Webb - Tribute Reading

Date: Wednesday 25th June, 2025, 4pm-6pm

Location: The Dax Centre, 30 Royal Parade, Parkville

The Dax Centre are the custodians of the Cunningham Dax Poetry Collection, managed by Dr Jennifer Harrison, which encompasses an extensive selection of poetry by people with a lived experience of mental health conditions. The Dax Centre are excited to host this poetry reading to further our commitment to preserving the legacy of poets with a lived experience.

Francis Webb (1925 - 73) has long had a reputation as one of Australia's most dazzling poets, praised in the postwar era and since by major names like Judith Wright, A. D. Hope, Gwen Harwood, Vincent Buckley, Rosemary Dobson, Les Murray, Dorothy Porter and Robert Adamson. Since the updated edition of his Collected Poems in 2011, a new generation has been astounded by not only Webb's undeniable talent, but also his courage in tackling social justice issues around racism, colonial impacts on First Nations people, xenophobia, poverty and environmental destruction.

Webb was also the first Australian poet to write openly about mental health experiences at a time when it was utterly taboo. Beginning with 'On First Hearing a Cuckoo' (1952) and 'A Death at Winson Green' (1955), Webb wrote around twenty poems set in the English and Australian mental hospitals he lived in from his mid-twenties until his death in 1973, aged 48. Webb's letters record multiple diagnoses including 'persecution mania' and schizophrenia, but he accepted none of these and instead invited readers into his life with what he called 'the sacred illness' and treatments such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and pneumo-encephalographs. He also wrote empathetically about his fellow patients, those 'plucked from the world of commonsense' for dementia, Down Syndrome, PTSD, or (like Webb) severe delusions, or indeed for the perceived social crime of being gay.

To celebrate 100 years since the poet's birth, The Dax Centre will hold a tribute reading with refreshments, co-hosted by poet and child psychiatrist Dr Jennifer Harrison and Toby Davidson, poet and editor of Francis Webb's Collected Poems. They will be joined by experienced poets and critics who will discuss the Webb legacy and read their favourite poems. This is a rare chance to hear the works of a true Australian prodigy recited and honoured by his most ardent fans.

The evening will feature readings by: Alice Allan, Robbie Coburn, John Hawke, Sandy Jeffs, Jacinta Le Plastrier, Mal McKimmie, Peter Otto, Peter Rose, Philip Salom, Alex Skovron.

Please **RSVP** to confirm your attendance. We would be honored to have you join us. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you in the gallery.

Warm regards,
The Dax Centre Team

For more information on the event, [please visit our website](#).