

Surprise Award

Australia Day, to me, means coming together, remembering the past and my culture and recognising people's amazing talented skills and their hard work to make a difference. Australia Day is time to have fun with loved ones and to remember the people who help, and continue to help, shape our Country.

On Australia Day I was asked by our local Council to do the Acknowledgement to Country in respect of my Culture.

When I arrived at the Australia Day venue at our little town of Cecil Plains, I was so surprised that at the event was not just my family but our whole community. I was so fortunate to have my best friend Priscilla McPhee from school and her beautiful family Libby, Craig and Edwina, my Grandma, parents, siblings, Aunts, Nan and Pop as well as my cousin Evie, who all surprised me. The surprises kept coming, which made me very happy and excited.

I was getting a little anxious before I had to speak then, out of the blue, the most special person to me, Mrs Sutton and her husband, walked in and all I could do was

cry as I have missed her from boarding since her retirement from Fairholme College. This surprise was so amazing and unexpected.

Confusion starting running through my mind as to why all these people had come to hear me give Acknowledgment to Country. My mum (Di Skene) kept telling me all week that my Grandma (Pamela Skene – 82 years old) was going to get an Award, as it was 20 years to the day that she received her last and I was so excited to be speaking in front of her for such a momentous occasion.

I delivered my Acknowledgement to Country, sat down waiting for her name to be called but the Awards were narrowing down, then The Junior Sports Award was announced. Councillor Ms Melissa Taylor read out the Junior Sports Person of the Year Award and called my name which was such a huge surprise. My mum definitely tricked me.

I have been playing Tennis and Golf from a very young age and have played at the Queensland State Championships for both Tennis and Golf. I volunteer in our

Penne with her award and very proud mum Di Skene



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Community and Fairholme College school community as well. I was so unprepared for a speech but thanked everyone that helped me become who I am today. I have given my dad curry over the years as he taught me to play Golf and my very first Tennis Coach, Leon Hohn, who was very patient, putting up with me for many years. Oh, not to forget my beautiful Grandma for picking me up and taking me to Golf when I was home, of course, watched me get cranky, be happy and still come in at the end of the day to spend time with the oldies at the Cecil Plains Golf Club. Thank you to Fairholme College for helping me grow, my family (my mum and dad) and my friends and everyone that came to celebrate and support me. What a day it was, well played Mum as you got me on this one.

By Penelope Skene



Penne Skene and Councillor Melissa Taylor
(Toowoomba Regional Council)



Penne is congratulated by her
proud grandmother

The 2021 Outback Writers Festival will be held in Winton, Outback Queensland, from Tuesday 22nd of June until Thursday, 24th of June. The venue will be the iconic Waltzing Matilda Centre.

Each year, including COVID YEAR 2020, we have conducted a short story Competition and 2021 entries close on 30th April. 3000 words max. To celebrate QANTAS' first board meeting in Winton in 1921, a special prize will be awarded by the Judge to a writer who also incorporates the acronym QANTAS into their story. The judge will also select entries to be included in the 2021 book. Books 1-5 will be available at the Festival.

Further details from our website www.outbackwritersfestival.com.au