

IAN TEMPLEMAN AM

1938–2015

HONORARY FELLOW · ELECTED 2004



PHOTO: COURTESY OF R. TEMPLEMAN

Ian Templeman died in Canberra on 3 November after over fifty years of significant contributions to Australian cultural life as an arts administrator, publisher, editor, poet and painter. Born in Perth on 10 October 1938, he trained as a painter and art teacher, before completing his BA at the University of Western Australia, winning prizes for English and poetry.

In the 1970s Ian moved into arts administration, initially as the National Executive Officer of the Australian Society for Education through the Arts, and then as assistant to the Director of the Festival of Perth. His appointment in 1973 as the inaugural Director of the Fremantle Arts Centre, where he stayed for seventeen years, resulted in a period of great expansion and achievement. From the beginning Ian ensured that the Centre included literature among its many arts activities, with workshops on poetry, and a poetry magazine entitled *Patterns*, which he co-edited. In 1975, in a further move to encourage local writing, Ian established the Fremantle Arts Centre Press, one of his major legacies. It was the first publisher of works by many Western Australian writers who would

go on to international success, including Elizabeth Jolley, Joan London and Gail Jones. And without the Press it is unlikely we would have had the best-selling and now classic works *My Place* by Sally Morgan, and *A Fortunate Life* by Albert Facey.

During these years, Ian also contributed in many other ways to Australian cultural life, serving on the Western Australian Literary Fund, the Australia Council, the Council of the National Library of Australia and the Public Lending Rights Committee, among others. In 1989, in recognition of his services to art and literature, he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia.

Ian Templeman's subsequent move to Canberra in 1990 to become Assistant Director-General, Public Programs at the National Library led to a great expansion in the library's publication and outreach programs. He established a new monthly magazine, the *National Library of Australia News*, to promote the library's collections, as well as *Voices*, a beautifully designed literary quarterly which published essays, fiction, poetry and reviews by local and international writers. He also revamped the library's exhibition, events and book publication programs and was instrumental in the setting up of the National Portrait Gallery in Old Parliament House.

During the 1990s Ian began his own publishing venture, Molongolo Press, and in 1998 he left the National Library to devote his energies to this. He published two series of beautifully produced pocket books by Canberra writers, with covers featuring paintings by the artist Romola Templeman, his wife. He also produced some highly attractive greeting cards illustrated by Romola which I remember receiving and later purchasing. Initially, however, I got to know Ian as a poet rather than a publisher, through the contributions he sent to the literary journal *Southerly* which I was editing in the '90s. He had published his first collection, *Poems*, in Western Australia in 1979 and continued to write and publish his poems in newspapers and literary magazines despite his many other activities. *These Glimpsed Interiors* was published in Canberra in 1997 followed by *An Incomplete Memoir* in 2000.

In the meantime, in 1999 Ian had taken on a new role at the Australian National University as Director of Publications for the Research School of Pacific and

Asian Studies (RSPAS). There he established the *RSPAS Quarterly Bulletin*, a literary journal, *Conversations*, and Pandanus Books, which published such successful works as Colin McPhedran's *White Butterflies* (2002). In 2002 he was appointed Chair of the ACT Cultural Council and served as a member of the ACT Chief Minister's Public Art Advisory Panel from 2006-11.

After retiring from the Australian National University in 2006, Ian kept busy writing poems and reviews for the *Australian Book Review* and other publications, besides beginning a new career as a garden and landscape designer. In November 2003, Ian was invited to contribute to the Australian Academy of the Humanities' annual symposium, speaking on the importance of university presses as a link between the university and the wider community as well as for their contribution to our cultural life. This was published as 'Ideas and Imagination' in *Writers, Readers and Publishers: Essays and Poems* (2004), edited by Brian Matthews FAHA. Ian was elected as an Honorary Fellow of the Academy in 2004 and awarded an honorary DLitt from the University of Western Australia in 2007.

In 2011, Ian Templeman was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Then, as he later wrote to me, some of his friends in Canberra began a project 'to distract me from my day to day difficulties': the publication of a volume of his selected poems, 'written over a lifetime', as a gift for his 75th birthday in 2013. 'I was given the opportunity to follow each stage of development. I was encouraged to listen to the discussion about selection, format and design. It was a complete joy.'

The Watchmaker's Imprint, whose title poem I had originally published in *Southerly* in 1998, duly appeared from Tin Kettle Books, as a beautifully designed hardback with an introduction by Canberra poets Paul Hetherington and Penelope Layland. As they note: 'Templeman frequently produced his best work when

exploring his emotional life. ...But, however personal these poems are, they range widely, subtly charting many of the characteristics of loss, absence, betrayal, affection and love.' A launch at the National Library by Tom Griffiths AO FAHA was planned for 24 April 2013. Then Ian was invited to Perth to open the 40th Anniversary Exhibition at the Fremantle Arts Centre in March. He flew over with difficulty but took the opportunity to have *The Watchmaker's Imprint* launched in Western Australia by old friend and fellow writer Nicholas Hasluck.

Ian later sent me a copy of this handsome volume and, after reading his poems, I asked if two of them could be included in the 2014 issue of the Academy's journal *Humanities Australia*. When he agreed, I asked if he could suggest some images to accompany the poems I had chosen. To my surprise, he told me that he had taken up painting again, after being treated with a newly available medication that had greatly improved his quality of life. When next in Canberra, together with Gillian Cosgrove, the Academy's Publications and Communications Coordinator, I visited Ian and Romola at their home to choose and photograph two of the paintings – bright, semi-abstracts full of energy, as readers of that issue of the journal would know. Ian was delighted to see his poems and paintings in *Humanities Australia* and later donated one of his paintings to the Academy. It now hangs in pride of place in the council meeting room.

Ian Templeman was a great facilitator who gave much of his time and energy to developing and promoting the artistic and literary work of others. It is fitting that he was able to devote his last years to his own work, producing some remarkable paintings and poems to add to his legacy.

ELIZABETH WEBBY FAHA