



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY  
Ms Leanne Castley MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA

## **Submission Cover sheet**

Inquiry into memorialisation through  
public commemoration

Submission number: 005

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The Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality  
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Dear Secretary

### **Inquiry into memorialisation through public commemoration**

In response to the terms of reference of this inquiry, I am writing to:

- express my support for improving the equity and increasing the diversity of people recognised through public commemoration in Canberra, and
- suggest specific opportunities to commemorate two significant women of letters: Rosemary Dobson, and Kerry Reed-Gilbert.

[Poets' Corner](#) in Garema Place in Canberra City comprises three statues of eminent poets with links to Canberra and the surrounding region: Judith Wright, A.D. Hope and David Campbell. Rosemary Dobson was a peer, and equal and a friend of these three poets. Rosemary was still living when Poets Corner was originally commissioned, and while there was a campaign for her to be recognised as part of it at the time, it was not then considered appropriate to include her. In 2013, 'Rosemary Dobson Park' was named in Deakin, but a place in Poets Corner seems more appropriate to Dobson's literary stature and legacy.

[Rosemary Dobson](#) was born in 1920. After her first book, *In a Convex Mirror*, was published in 1944, she had a distinguished poetic career, publishing more than 20 volumes of verse over her lifetime and receiving awards including the 1984 Patrick White Award, an AO and the Australia Council's prestigious Writer's Emeritus Award in 1996, and the 2001 Age Book of the Year Award.

Rosemary Dobson left a rich literary legacy for Canberra, through her writing, and her mentorship and encouragement of other writers. This was celebrated at an [event on 11 April 2021](#) as part of the Poetic City Festival, when a group of esteemed poets gathered at Poets Corner to read her poetry and reflect on the fitness of her recognition with her own statue there. The event, the subject of this [article in the Canberra Times](#), featured readings by Melinda Smith, Geoff Page, Suzanne Edgar, Caren Florance, Lesley Lebkovicz, Sarah St Vincent Welch and Maggie Shapley, who also shared anecdotes about their connection to Rosemary and the significance of her work.

'Rosemary's Corner' reading in progress:



The poets after the event:



Another writer I would suggest for possible commemoration is [Kerry Reed-Gilbert](#). A Wiradjuri woman, writer, artist and activist, Reed-Gilbert was the inaugural Chairperson of the First Nations Australia Writers Network (FNAWN). FNAWN is the peak body for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writers, poets and storytellers, advocating and lobbying on their behalf and supporting ongoing development opportunities, in order to sustain and enhance First Nations Australia writing and storytelling. Kerry conducted writing workshops nationally and internationally and her poetry and prose have been published in many journals and anthologies internationally. In 2006 she received an 'Outstanding Achievement in Poetry' award and 'Poet of Merit' Award from the International Society of Poets.

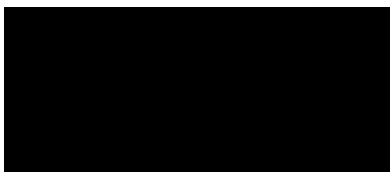
She has edited, published and been published in numerous books and publications, including *Talkin' About Country: Poetry Collection* (Kuracca); *The Strength of Us as Women: Black Women Speak* (ed.; Ginninderra Press); *Our Place: Stories about Good Practice in Youth Work with Young Aboriginal People* (ed. with Shane Brown; South Sydney Youth Services); *Message Stick: Contemporary Aboriginal Writing* (ed.; IAD Press); *Ngunnungula (Belonging to Here): Stories and Poems* (ed.; FreeXpression); and *Black Woman Black Life* (Wakefield Press).

Reed-Gilbert was a member of the ACT Us Mob Writing (UMW) group and was FNAWN co-editor for the Ora Nui Journal collaboration between First Nations Australia writers and Maori writers. She was born in central NSW, but spent much of her life in Canberra.

Kerry Reed-Gilbert was an influential leader for First Nations writers in Australia, as eloquently described in [this tribute](#) written shortly after her passing in 2019 by Janine Leane. I recommend her for consideration for suitable commemoration, which would of course need to happen in consultation with her family and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and I look forward to the recommendations and conclusions of the Committee.

Yours sincerely



Poet, Artist, Producer  
28 September 2021