

Visions of Brisbane Foreword

More than any other Australian city, Brisbane is a place of futures.

It's not necessarily that we're high-tech, switched-on, early adopters of the latest twenty-first century gizmos and gadgets. Nor are we keen to disown our past, wipe it away and start again with a clean slate. Quite the opposite. It's about this city's unbridled enthusiasm for tomorrow, its constant need to know... what's next. Brisbane at once romanticises its past and rushes to embrace its future. We hold these things not as binary opposites but as a balance – a counterweight to an uncertain and sometimes uncomfortable present. Looking forward, looking back. Ashamed of neither.

So it probably wasn't surprising that the Museum of Brisbane (MoB – a wonderfully irreverent acronym) wanted to look forward to help the city understand and celebrate in an ever-so-small way what has come before. The Museum opens in City Hall later this month and will integrate social history, visual arts, craft and design in a celebration of Brisbane's contemporary culture and history, heritage and people.

Their first exhibition, Bite the Blue Sky – Brisbane Beginnings, focuses on where the city came from. And in a genuinely divine leap of artistic logic, the MoB curators decided they wanted a piece of futuristic fiction about Brisbane to round out the exhibition. They contacted Fantastic Queensland - a body designed to foster and grow the creation of speculative fiction in all its forms in the state – for help. Fantastic Queensland president Richard Pitchforth (a name you'll see later in these pages) contacted the Vision Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Writers Group. After some consultation and another leap – this time of courage – from MoB, we organised a competition. The Museum agreed to choose the best story produced by a local writer to include in the inaugural exhibition. The stories you see here are a sample of what Brisbane speculative fiction writers created for that competition.

The judges – two MoB curators and The Courier-Mail speculative fiction book reviewer Jason Nahrung – read 16 stories and chose Shane Brown's *Brisbane 2404* as the winner. Two other stories - Kate Eltham's *Ruben's Beanstalk* and Chris Quin's *The Last Voyage of Vicky-Lyn* caused them enough heartache to warrant being highly commended.

The stories here speak of Brisbane's future. But they also speak to its present – a present rich in creativity, vibrant in artistic endeavour. The genres these authors write in are often considered less worthy, less weighty than those of our 'literary' cousins. They're sometimes looked down upon as being third-rate. And our ideas are often scoffed at for being loud and brash and over-reaching. Sort of like the city we inhabit, really.

But forget all of that. Stories are meant to be read; lived; loved, and enjoyed. Go and read them now. Everything else can wait.

Until tomorrow.

Robert Hoge
Vision President

- *First appeared 2003 as the foreword to Visions of Brisbane – a short story collection produced by Vision Writers following a competition run by the Museum of Brisbane for their inaugural display.*