Whiddon Bush Poetry | Winner 2026

The Chairmaker's Rest

Ninety-six years sits easy now
in a sunlit corner chair,
boots traded for soft slippers
and slow afternoon air.

At Whiddon Weeronga the caring atmosphere hums,
the day moves calm and wide,
as I watch Wee Waa roll along
with the cotton season's tide.

I've walked these and Narrabri's streets near all my life,
knew every shop and name,
watched boys grow into fathers here
and paddocks change the same.

Raised my kids on honest work,
on fixing what you own,
on turning up when neighbours call
and never leaving one alone.

My hands learned trade instead of books -
leather, springs and thread,
turning broken lounge room seats
to comfort years ahead.

From kitchen chairs to tractor seats,
from pubs to church hall pews,
I stitched the town back together
with canvas, hide and screws.

You'd hear the hammer down the street,
the staple gun's sharp crack,
and folks would lean upon the door
for a yarn while waiting out back.

The summers burned, the winters bit,
the droughts came hard and long,
but work and family kept a man
steady, proud and strong.

I never chased the city lights,
never needed more,
everything worth having
walked straight through my door.

Now my tools are finally resting,
the workshop still going strong,
and time moves slower than the Namoi
whilst my son continues on.

I tell them, Ive earnt my rest now, mate
so I stretch these old legs free,
pour a quiet scotch in the evening light
and let the memories visit me.

Kids grown tall, the family business lives on,
the town still close and dear,
and young staff bring the outside in
so the bush still reaches here.

I built my life one job at a time,
one family, one repair
and funny thing, after all those years,
I'm still sitting in a chair.

Only now it holds me gently,
no deadlines left to keep
just the hum of a small bush town
and a well-earned, peaceful nights sleep.

After miles of work and worry,
and giving more than I took
a man can finally put his feet up
and close the ledger book.

John Knight, Wee Waa