

Whiddon Bush Poetry | 2026

Cotton Country

I grew up where the highway hums low
and the paddocks stretch further than plans ever go,
where the sky isn't framed by buildings or glass
but rolls on forever in sun-bleached grass.

In Wee Waa - the cotton capital,
white fields blooming like summer snowfall,
bales lined up like giants at rest,
soft as the clouds in a wide blue chest.

We learned the language of dust and rain,
of cracked red earth and a coming storm's stain,
of tractors crawling at sunrise light
and mozzies that owned the humid night.

Summer there isn't just warm - it's fire,
a shimmering road and a baked-out wire,
thongs too hot on a midday street,
bitumen bending beneath your feet.

But even in forty-degree heatwaves bright,
there's laughter drifting through Friday night,
kids on bikes till the magpies call,
footy games in a neighbour's yard.

It's a small community-oriented town -
no one's a stranger when you're around.
You can't buy milk without stopping for chat,
"How's your mum?" and "Imagine that!"

Always a friendly face in the IGA line,
a wave from a ute as you pass by,
news travels faster than any phone,
but you're never left to stand alone.

We grew up knowing whose dam was dry,
who needed help when the river ran high,
who'd lost a crop or gained a son,
who'd battled drought and still held on.

The bush teaches you patience and grit,
how to mend a fence and just get on with it,
how to find your shade in the hardest sun,
and still believe the rain will come.

And though the cities might glitter and call,
with neon nights and crowded halls,
my heart still rests where the cotton blows -
in dusty boots and familiar roads.

Because nowhere else feels quite as free
as that wide-open sky that raised me.
In the heat, in the dust, in the slow-paced hum -
the bush is home.

And there's nowhere else I'd rather be

Anne Schwager, Whiddon Wee Waa

Assisted by Lifestyle Officer Cassandra