



From the Editor

EarthSong

■ WAS SITTING IN THE AIRPORT when a very agitated man started telling me his plane to Cairns had been delayed again and this might mean he would not be able to take time off to visit the Blencoe Falls, in the Girringun National Park as he had promised himself. He worked in the business of 2 way radios and travelled all over the country negotiating with farmers, transport companies and the like.

He loved his work because he always took time to drive through the bush, the outback or along the coast to visit places of beauty: 'such diverse beauty' he said, 'red soil, rocky outcrops rivers and dry creek beds, coastal dunes and off shore islands'. 'It's good for my spirit', he said. He told me of a recent experience in western Queensland of seeing what looked like a small but strange mountain range. When he went to investigate he was horrified to find the 'range' was in fact massive dumpings of tailings from a huge open cut coal mine. 'It's wrong' he said 'you can't just cut the earth open like that - it's like raping her!' Our conversation continued for many more minutes.

This was a very ordinary man, dressed in his company's polo top and heavy work jeans and boots, but he was a very special human being, deeply in touch with the spirit of the land. He would not have used the word 'sacred' but he experienced a deep calling to be in communion. He was thrilled that his son seemed to understand and resonate with his feelings and was concerned that his daughter seemed so materialistic and consumer focussed.

We have all had experiences similar to his. We know the feeling of being called into places where some numinous presence is communicated by the land, the sky, the water, the trees, the creatures, the many manifestations of the energy that permeates all being. What do these experiences mean? How do they define us? As the new consciousness deepens within us and we know its resonance with ancient wisdom, we find ourselves growing in the awareness that the Universe is the primary sacred community and that it is within our Earth that we encounter the manifestations of Mystery.

This edition has taken on an almost impossible task - articulating the nature of spirituality. The articles addressing the theme adopt a range of lenses and contexts to address 'Spirit at the Heart of Creation'. Perhaps it is Lois Huey-Heck's image on the cover that captures best the sense of knowing and unknowing that is spirituality and it carries the message that a powerful means of expressing spirituality is through art and poetry.

'Poetry and spirituality are a kind of paying attention, with the senses and the self' writes Anne Elvey in Poetry and Soul and she wonders if there would be something of sacrament and grace in the interchange of bodies, breath, place and story - some of which takes form in poetry. Engaging several powerful poetic insights she concludes that 'a poet ... poeting might just be at the edge of ... *mysterium tremendum*, acting, writing, reading 'as if it's holy'.

Mary Graham shares profound insights into Aboriginal place based knowledge and contrasts it with Western scientific method where Inquiry precedes Place, where knowledge acquisition both

defines and supersedes place. Her list of Aboriginal Terms of Reference Underpinning Place illustrate how Place is always present as a living spiritual presence in both time and space. This article invites close attention and, indeed, a number of re-readings to capture the integrated nature of place based spirituality.

Caroline Smith's article engages in an interesting conversation with Mary's. She highlights the fact that mechanistic and reductionist science 'killed spirit, leaving us lost and without meaning in a cold, hostile universe'. However the more recent discoveries of systems theory, ecology, evolution, chaos and complexity theories have revealed the intricate nature and quality of relationships between entities and the mysterious inner dimension of all being.

You will be fascinated by the article on children's spirituality and intrigued by the way some activists avoid burn out through a deep sense of relationship with their bioregion. Two practicing Buddhist share their insights and there is much more.

In conclusion maybe Trevor Parton has captured spirituality when he says that every encounter with any entity can be seen as sacred presence and catalyst for our own growth as embodiments of the universe ■