# Collier's poem swoops on silver

By **Murray Trembath**

IT'S not uncommon for politicians to experience the urge to write after retirement.

But former Miranda MP Barry Collier produced something far different to the normal memoirs.

His poem *Maggie Magpie* won second prize in the nationwide 2015 C.J. Dennis Poetry Competition for previously unpublished work in the adults writing for children and judged by children section.

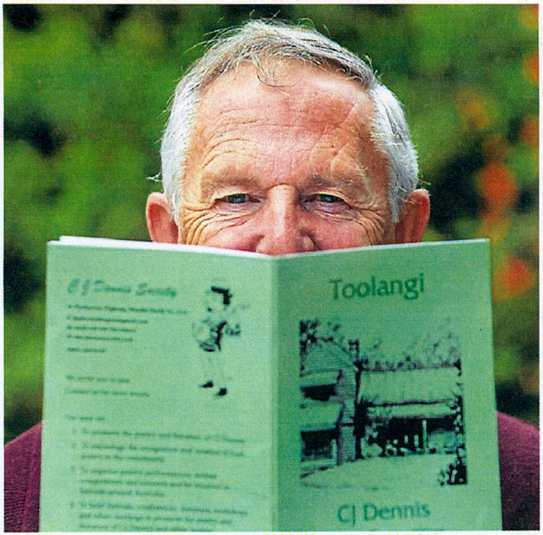
Mr Collier was inspired after seeing his grandchildren, aged 10 and six, feeding magpies at their home.

"I just put pen to paper," he said.

Mr Collier said he had written poetry before, but had not been published or entered a competition. The competition prize was $150.

This year's competition marked the 100th anniversary of the publication of *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* and was part of the Toolangi Festival.

Toolangi is a small town in Victoria near Kinglake, the scene of the Black Saturday bushfires, where Dennis spent his later years and wrote *The Sentimental Bloke*.




**Politician turned poet:** Barry Collier with the booklet containing the winning poems. **Picture: John Veage**

## MAGGIE MAGPIE

*(First four verses)*

There's old Maggie Magpie:
There again on our front lawn,
Looking for juicy worms and grubs,
Since just before the dawn.

We'll get some bread to feed him –
My little sister, my Mum and me –
We'll throw it to him in pieces,
From our low, sunny balcony.

Maggie Magpie sees our bread,
Stoops and eats it carefully,
Looks around, then calls out loud
To his waiting family.

One by one, down they come –
Mummy Magpie and her brood –
Scaring off all the other birds,
And claiming all the food!

© barrycollier 2015

**See the full poem on the *Leader* website and tell us what you think.**