ST GEORGE & SUTHERLAND SHIRE Leader

Shire councillor Barry Collier's poem on drought wins Henry Lawson National Literary Award

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Sutherland Shire councillor Barry Collier has won first place in a category of the prestigious 2017 Henry Lawson National Literary Awards.

Mr Collier's poem *Millennium Drought* was selected as the winner of free verse poetry by Australian poet David Campbell.

The award carried prize money of $500, and Mr Collier read his poem at the Henry Lawson Memorial & Literary Society's awards ceremony in Melbourne.

The society was formed in 1923, a year after Lawson's death.

Mr Campbell said he was impressed by the calibre of entries in this year's competition.

"What generally made the winning poems stand out was the language ....turns of phrase or metaphors that brought images vividly to life or caught an emotion in just a few words," he said.

"*Millennium Drought* poignantly illustrates a grim, haunting scenario that is all too familiar in drought-stricken areas of Australia – the toil of generations comes to nothing as a family's property falls to 'the bankers with their high-priced silks'."

Mr Campbell said Mr Collier's poem was uniquely Australian, and one to which many rural families could relate.

"*Millennium Drought* was full of imagery and with a very powerful ending," he said.

The 2017 Henry Lawson National Literary Awards attracted 440 entries from throughout Australia`

Mr Collier said he was "delighted and honoured" by the award.

He said, while he had been entering poetry competitions since retiring as Miranda MP in 2015, he had never been placed first.