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WRITING

TO THE

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Edited by

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Foreword

Poets, like cartoonists, are able to show us things we cannot see. Or which we are unwilling to see. Two identical beggars, sitting on the pavement, begging bowl in front of them. One has a sign which says 'Help me, I am blind'. The other has a sign which says 'Help me, I can see'.

The introductory essay to this book captures beautifully the political issues associated with boat people. The poems capture the human realities to which our politicians and commentators are often blind. The people who wrote the poems can see. Hopefully, the people who read the poems will also start to see.

Poetry serves several functions. Good poetry sees the world in ways which are invisible to most of us – until we read the poems. In doing so, it smuggles uncomfortable ideas into complacent minds. The lacerating poetry of the First World War showed just how powerfully the truth can be told. Wilfred Owen, in particular, and his mentor Siegfried Sassoon, showed how poetry can strip away the protective layers of delusion which protect us from the truth of what we do.

In that tradition, this book of poetry captures some of the brutal reality of Australia's refugee policy in 2016. As Kevin Brophy writes –

You have made an example of me
for I should not have run so quickly
when my husband was killed
and my older brother too –
no, I should not have escaped,
I should have queued
or appealed to you in a letter
of reasoned prose [...]

Vladimir Mayakovsky once wrote that Art (which includes visual art, music and poetry) 'is not a mirror to reflect Society, it is an anvil on which to shape

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