



Solli Raphael speaking at the Byron Bay Writers Festival's 'Kids Big Day Out'. (Photo: Kate Holmes)

## **August 2023**

Hey, hi, hello! How are you going? What's been happening? August has come and gone, and I hope it has left you with some good times, maybe some clarity, progress in the direction you were hoping for, perhaps a spontaneous moment, one that was unexpected yet filled with a bit of surprise and magic.

Refreshing is the best word to describe my month. Emerging from the mundanity of my office walls and rediscovering the roads that led me there brought a refreshing collection of experiences.

From connecting with different creatives to catching up with people I haven't seen in several years, August reminded me of the value and importance of connection and the energetic power of coming together.

After living without it, I think we all appreciate good conversations and shared experiences a little more. That face-to-face interaction FaceTimes and Zoom meetings can't quite replicate.

Heading to Byron Bay for this year's writer's festival was a delightful way to begin the month. There's something unique about the Byron Bay Writers Festival compared to

other writers' festivals in Australia. It has an almost retreat-like vibe and is brought to life by many incredible people, writers and attendees alike.



Audience participation during Byron Bay Writers Festival's 'Kids Big Day Out'. (Photo: Kate Holmes)

I had the privilege of speaking during the primary and secondary school days, at the Kids Big Day Out, and appearing for different interviews, performances and signings across the festival.

As captured in the photo above, I love hearing from and learning from the audience, creating moments for people to share ideas, stories and perspectives and seeing what direction that takes the conversation is always a highlight.

Thank you to everyone who came to the festival. It was great to meet so many awesome human beings!

As well as soaking up the festival's atmosphere, I had a chance to head into Byron and enjoy the good vibes and weather.



Primary Schools Day. (Photo: Byron Writers Festival)



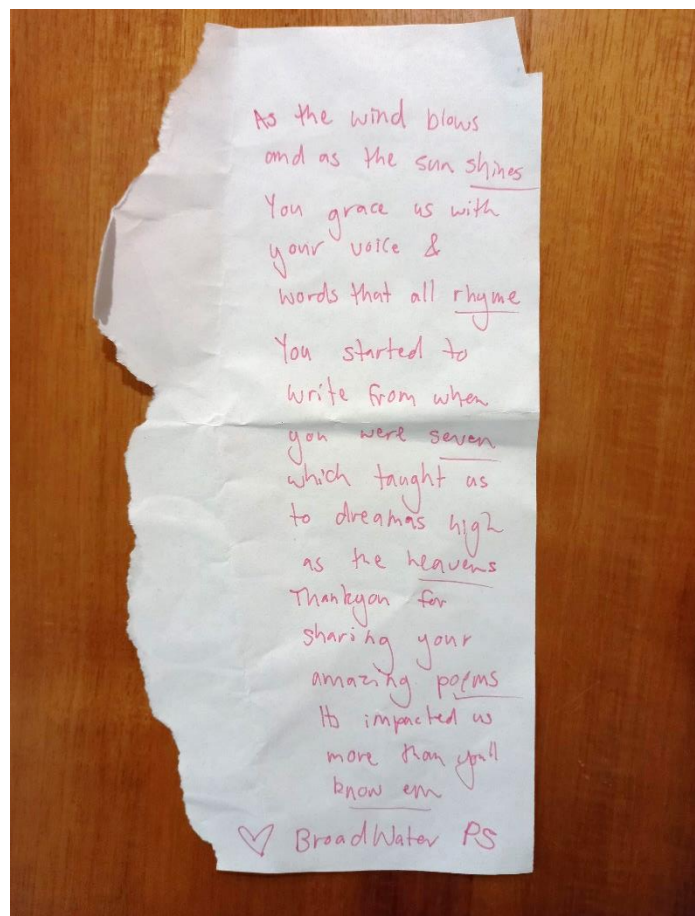
Oliver and I catching the Byron Bay Train after a day at the festival.

Fellow author Oliver Phommavanh and I caught a train into Byron Bay. But not just any ordinary train; this is a vintage, restored, community-run, solar-powered train running on the old train line, which was also restored in the process - a great, affordable, environmentally friendly and entertaining mode of transport.

August is the busiest month of the year for authors in Australia, with the annual, long-standing CBCA's Book Week. It is a week of celebrations, especially in schools, to celebrate all things books.

I love visiting schools and talking with students. From the unparalleled enthusiasm of Grade One to the thought-out and sometimes reserved perspectives of Grade 12, kids and teens have so much to offer and so many dreams, and sometimes a bit of inspiration or guidance is all they need to make it a reality.

When it comes to inspiration, it goes both ways. I'm always inspired by my time spent in schools and generous offerings like this beautiful poem from Broadwater Public School. Which, by the way, was written during my presentation... incredible. A big thank you to Broadwater PS.



A poem by Broadwater Public School.

Book Week followed with a trip to Melbourne, where I visited Year 7 students at Brighton Grammar School. It was especially exciting as this was my first in-person visit to Brighton Grammar after Zooming for previous years. Thank you to the Brighton Grammar staff for having me and the energetic students who managed to channel their energy into writing some terrific poetry.



A quick selfie before a day of workshopping at Brighton Grammar School in Melbourne.

August also saw the launch of the Best Part Movement. Best Part is a social movement I started, hoping to create a space of 100% positivity.

While discussing hard-hitting issues and social concerns is needed to tackle them, it's just as necessary to balance that with discussing the many great things about life. And with the amount happening in the world and our individual lives, it's essential that we take a moment to remind ourselves of the many positives and things we appreciate most in our lives.

It has only been a short time since the movement launched, and there's already much momentum, which I'm so grateful for. If you'd like to join the movement by

sharing the best part of your life, you can head to [bestpartmovement.org](https://bestpartmovement.org) or use #mybestpart on your socials.

That's all from me for this post. Thank you for reading, and I'll see you next month!