

**Youth Poetry Category – 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize 2021**

**DEAD CITY**

**By Hailey Moffat**

For 17 years all I wanted to do was leave;  
but now all I want is to forget how little time I have.  
I hated the claustrophobia of a small town;  
but forgot the enclosing IBM skyscraper that has lights mimicking the sun at 3 am.  
I thought I shan't miss the dust in my eyes and musk of the tractor;  
but failed to realise I hate the moist smog of the Flinders St Station underpass more.  
I felt lonely and alone walking down a hushed channel;  
but walking down Swanston St realised I'm even more alone.  
I shattered in the ear-splitting country silence;  
but awoke to the clatterly clunk of a Metro train at 5:36 am carrying workhorses.

I thought I'd miss the sunburn on my cherub cheeks,  
but the city dirt makes them just as flushed and scarred from cyst-like urban acne.

I thought I hated the almost archaic, corrugated roads;  
but they are nothing to the jumbled mess of ring-roads and 3-way roundabouts.

I thought there was nothing here for me;  
but I think I'm forgetting the things I miss running for the train leaving Southern Cross.

I always hated the morbid, needle-lined, concrete footpath;  
but that same concrete spirals up every CBD skyscraper as an eternal reminder.

I have been waiting to leave the dead wheat paddocks forever;  
but to leave for a city just as dead.