

Menindee

The water... at first just a rumour but could it be true?

The Darling-Baaka was dead. Well, this much we all knew when

we saw it... the fish, packed in muddy puddles no space between, silversides

showing their best sides

to the flashing cameras.

What a waste.

City TV screens showed the drama, in real time,

the obscenity of death,

soon forgotten in Sydney

They have the beach, and their own crime.

But the stories were coming thick and fast

about the water,

coming at last. All the way from Queensland

where they were cursing flooded highways. It has snaked its way

under cover of dark

Past cotton farms to reach Menindee.

It's on the news!

The radio could talk of nothing else. It was huge!

The road to Menindee, packed with cars, the river bank lined

With fishermen's lines flashing in the sun, arcs of light

watched by curious crows whose guttural cries of doom

are ignored. Parrots take flight and soon there will be pelicans.

Oh, the excitement!

I push through the crowd: young and old, eager for the show.

Oldtimers compete with stories of the Dry while

young ones wonder why. What's all the fuss about?

a small child in pink shorts and thongs

knows only drought, oblivious to the moment,

plays with a barking dog of undetermined genes

and I reach the barrier to see the silver grey deluge burst forth, spewing, roaring thunder
through the weir gates -

open to celebration

- pouring, a torrent, no sign of stopping can it be true?

Young and old, we hung over the edge to watch in

silence. Even the dog stopped barking.

The atmosphere, like in church. Reverential.

Holy.

The water flows, uninhibited. A blessing.

We lunch at Maiden's pub - fish and chips, what else? -

Make the dusty drive back to Broken Hill still fizzing with hope.

No waterbirds here. There will always be crows.