

Poet set to headline

Homelessness Fundraiser



Go Transit chief operating officer Rick Chapman, poet Rupert McCall OAM and Australian singer and musician Bernard Fanning at the launch of Mr McCall's Golden Soil poetry anthology.

Celebrated Australian and internationally recognised poet Rupert McCall OAM will visit Mount Gambier to perform the role of emcee for the 2020 Support Homeless People Luncheon on Friday, April 3, at The Barn Palais.

The Brisbane based poet recently launched his much anticipated "best of" anthology, Golden Soil, which marks his 25th year as one of the nation's leading poets, who has been honoured with addressing crowds from Anzac Cove at Gallipoli to Ground Zero for the New York Fire Department.

One of the attendees at Mr McCall's book launch in December last year

was Liam Flaherty, Captain of Rescue 2, the most revered station in New York's iconic Fire Department. Captain Flaherty said when he first heard Mr McCall's critically acclaimed tribute, A Firefighter's Dream, written in response to the tragic events of 9/11, he was blown away and determined to meet the poet.

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Rupert McCall Oam

"I basically told him that in the nine years since 9/11, I had heard speeches, songs, poems and sermons from poets, priests and politicians alike, but this poem was head and shoulders above," Captain Flaherty said.

Mr McCall wrote the poem at the request of Australian firefighters travelling for the Tour of Duty Charity Run in the USA in 2010. There was a big send-off in Sydney, where he recited A Firefighter's Dream for the Australian firefighters, with former prime minister John Howard attending in his role as patron. The poem was recorded and played at a function at the Australian Consulate in Los Angeles before the run and was well received by the Americans.

Captain Flaherty subsequently rang Mr McCall, asking him to fly to New York 30 days later for the 9/11 Ceremony at Ground Zero. "Of course I said yes," Mr McCall said. He delivered the poem on the night of 9/11 in 2011 during a sunset ceremony at the site of the World Trade Centre.

"He stunned a crowd of thousands when he recited those magical words on the very ground where so many of my brothers were lost," Captain Flaherty said. "There wasn't a dry eye on the street that night and it remains one of the most powerful moments I have ever experienced."

Support Homeless People Luncheon chairman Barry Stafford said the committee was excited to be able to bring the renowned poet to Mount

FUNDRAISER SELLS OUT IN RECORD TIME

The 2020 Support Homeless People Luncheon to be held on Friday 3 April at the Barn Palais has sold out - the quickest take up of tickets in the event's history. The first luncheon was held in 2012 and was the brainchild of the late philanthropist Barry Maney OAM and Barry Maney Group dealer principal Barry Stafford. "To have the luncheon sell-out one month before the event has blown me and my committee away," Mr Stafford said. "We have businesses who have supported the event since its inception and as soon as we let them know it's on again, they purchase their tables. Each year we get asked to increase the ticket numbers but we decided some time ago that because this event is about relationships, and it is those relationships that lead to substantial donations, so we cap it at 500."

Gambier for the event through a local connection. Q Advertising Public Relations director Peppi Bueti lived in Mount Gambier during his formative years. He now lives and works on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, but still makes regular visits to the Limestone Coast to catch up with family and friends and maintain his connection to his hometown.

"I've known Rupert for well over a decade and I've seen him perform at a number of major events in Australia and overseas and I was also fortunate to be engaged to undertake the communications for his recent book launch," he said. "I've always wanted to bring Rupert back home to perform in Mount Gambier and when I suggested it to Barry, he was very keen as he knew Rupert would help take the event to the next level. We have a table booked at the lunch and I'll be there to see Rupert perform his magic to a massive crowd, while also supporting such an important cause."

"...and it is through relationships that we can find local solutions to societal issues too..."

Barry Stafford

Mr Stafford said the luncheon was "all about relationships and how we can help others". "It's through relationships that we can bring the speakers to town and it is through relationships that we can find local solutions to societal issues too," he said.

Golden Soil features many of Mr McCall's finest works spanning 27 years, including his renowned masterpiece Green and Gold Malaria, along with odes to Roger Federer, Rod Laver, Steve Irwin, Winx, Shane Warne, Black Caviar, the Wallabies and the Melbourne Cup. There are also tributes to the soldiers of Afghanistan and another piece commissioned by the Australian War Memorial for the Anzac Centenary.

"In my conversations with Barry, I am learning about the challenges that people can face in country towns when they are experiencing homelessness," Mr McCall said. "I have been impressed by the success of the Support Homeless People Luncheon and how the business community comes together to support a local charity. The fact the funds raised remain in the town to directly help local people makes this event even more special."



Above - Support Homeless People Luncheon committee chairman Barry Stafford and committee members Robin Reid, Anne Hinky-Tyler, Di Ind, Astyn Reid & ac.care marketing and communications manager Jason Wallace ready to welcome guests to this year's event on April 3.

ac.care is one of the few organisations created and run by country people for country people. Its mission is for all country people to have a safe home, enough money to live on and strong, positive relationships. Core services include foster care recruitment and support, residential care, homelessness programs, Aboriginal services, adult community education, family services and support. Founded in Mount Gambier, ac.care now provides services across the Limestone Coast, Murraylands, Murray Mallee, Riverland, Fleurieu Peninsula and Adelaide Hills.