

**John West**

## A POEM FOR MY SON

There's much to say  
but most useful  
is how to be afraid  
and not show it;  
I'm doing it now  
as I talk to you  
the only way I know.

You terrified me  
when I met you,  
screaming from the forceps  
and the twenty hours  
squashed against Mum's spine.

Everyone holds fear  
but it's heavier for some;  
some calmly slice you up  
while you stumble on in air;  
teachers and bosses  
often do this well.

It comes in sheets and lumps like lead;  
it's suddenly  
underneath my doona  
when I wake at 6 for work,  
when I wake on weekends  
and all I have to do  
is stay sober until tea.

The lumps coagulate  
in coat and trouser pockets  
(you'll notice them  
when you stand beside ten men  
and find you cannot piss)  
and here's another,

formed into a perfect six-pack,  
on the desk beside me now  
as I write this out for you.

Entries are invited for the 2000  
**BRUCE DAWE NATIONAL  
POETRY PRIZE**

**PRIZE: \$1,000**

**CLOSING DATE: 31 JULY 2000**

**ANNOUNCEMENT: 1 NOV 2000**

For conditions of entry, entry form, and any  
other information, please contact:

Dept of Humanities & International Studies  
Faculty of Arts  
USQ

TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

Phone: (07) 4631 1065

Fax: (07) 4631 1063

Email: [akinsf@usq.edu.au](mailto:akinsf@usq.edu.au)

Website:

[http://www.usq.edu.au/faculty/arts/  
HUM&SOC/BDNPP/INDEX.htm](http://www.usq.edu.au/faculty/arts/HUM&SOC/BDNPP/INDEX.htm)