

Back Yards.

Whatever has become of the back yards?
Where children played and Mango trees grew,
Where chooks laid eggs and Dad had his shed,
Whatever has happened to those yards I knew?

We played in safety in our own back yard,
Rode our bikes round and round the shed
Built tree houses in the old mango tree,
And had fun until time for our bed.

Our own back yard was a wondrous place,
Footy goal posts (well a couple of trees) at the side
With a cricket pitch down the middle of the lawn,
And lots of room to play 'Seek and Hide'

The neighbours' yards all joined around ours,
Their kids came over to join in our play,
Mothers chatted as they boiled washing clean
And hung sheets out in the sun each Monday.

The Murphy's 10 kids, and the Petersen's too,
The Heinrich's and Cenzi's and the Wong's,
Our multiracial neighbourhood families,
All shared their back yards with us Long's.

I went to see a brand new housing estate
Touted as 'Modern and so progressive'
Designer houses with luxury there abounding,
But NO back yards at all –I thought that regressive!

No gardens stretching across the front yard,
Just plants neatly confined to stony edges,
No verandahs to sit on to catch the breeze,
No room between houses for hedges!

I asked what children would do during play,
The 'wise' salesman looked quite askance,
"Our project has some community parks,
Where children can play and can prance."

So in these houses all modern and bright,
That breezes can enter so seldom,
Where air conditioners hum day and night,
Children are not really welcome.

The salesman looked down his nose at me,
He thought that I was just so old-fashioned,
He raved on about Internet connections
And computer games! (Isn't that Obsessed!)

I smiled at him in my best, nicest way,
And walked out to the road way so narrow,
As I said softly to him as I walked away,
This is surely the slums of tomorrow!

I hurried back to my old war service home,
Not modern nor artistically décoré,
But a real home where children love to play,
In the back yard their dad so adored.

They do not need to go out to the park,
They can play in the yard and tree house tall,
Or help Granddad down in the shed there
As he makes lots of things for us all.

They are safe in the back yard down there,
Where I can keep an eye on them too,
They are never bored in my old back yard,
For they have plenty of things they can do.

I feel sad for the other young children,
Who grow up in houses so confined,
That they have no room for their playtime,
And are frequently bored out of their mind.

It seems such a shame that in this vast land,
We have to eliminate 'back yards' completely,
And create expensive luxury ghettos there,
That confine our children so very neatly.

No room to explore and create and to play,
No cricket or footy to play there,
Just acres of glistening concrete walls,
And tiled roofs looking all the same here.

What will this mean for tomorrow's child,
Who has never had freedom to safely play,
Who sits for hours watching computer screens,
That take up so much time every day?

I know the world will survive and go on,
And children will become old and dated,
But I also know that the lucky ones
Will be those whose back yard was highly rated.