The Cattlemen's cup

The drought sat hard on Gippsland, for three long dusty years,
Many that lived upon the land had left with nothing but tears.
Those that stayed with dying stock toiled on because they must
Maintain their family legacy and not betray their trust.

The football teams were failing, the stalwarts worn right through,
They'd always turned to timber but the mills were closing too.
Yet Gippsland folk had one small spark , to win them back some pride
They sent a young slip of a girl, in the Cattlemen's cup to ride.

That race held in the mountains is a test of rider and horse,
Steep bush and river crossings mark a tough and dangerous course.
The bushmen train stockhorses droving cattle through the scrub,
The hardest riders in the mountains come race the Cattlemen's Cup.

She rode a horse called Monkey, a legend to the last,
They bumped and knocked and shut her out, you must be tough and fast.
Despite the odds she carried through, brave first across the line,
But cheers died when they changed the rules ,for a woman it wasn't time.

Next year she raced as a jockey, to prove what she could do,

Won her first three starts with ease and raced the season through.

At her last race in the country, she was leading when she fell,

The whole field raced right over her and kicked her body to hell.

For seventeen days in a coma, her life held by a thread,

Her close friends held a vigil, and prayed she wouldn't end up dead.

They said she'd never ride again as in a frame she lay,

Yet a young man by her bedside swore she'd hold the cup one day.

Though the greatest prize she ever sought was out of reach for good,

Her cheerful courage inspired us, more than winning ever could.

Next year she was at the cup, wheelchair bound and wracked in pain,

Not for pity did she show, but to cheer for her mates again.

This time Gippsland hopes sat on that young man, tall and raw,

He'd mustered cattle since a boy, he longed to settle a score.

The race ran fast through thick dark scrub, he rode like a man possessed,

Held his way to the final straight, eyes burning to win his quest.

The crowd roared out a mighty cheer, they wanted him to win.

But he dismounted teary eyed, then gave the girl his grin.

They pulled him to the winner's stand, still cheering long and loud.

His eves never left the smiling girl, and said "My god I'm proud!"

"It's hard to keep our hopes alive, with paddocks of dust and black,

It's things like this that give us heart, to grin and not turn back."

"We're battling just to keep our schools and field a cricket side"

"OK, they said, "We understand, now come and take your prize."

He walked back down the stairway, without his prize or cup,

Came back holding in his arms the girl that wouldn't give up.

"You'll not give this cup to me, it's time to right the past"

With trembling hands and glowing smile, she help her cup, at last.