

# RACING THE WILD

BY AUTHOR ROSANNA ANDREA FEEKEN

Chris Franklin, a teenage boy living in rural Australia, works daily alongside his older twin brothers under the demanding eye of their father, renowned racehorse trainer Leon Franklin. From mucking out stables to exercising high-performance horses, the boys live a life of routine and pressure. But behind closed doors, Chris is also struggling with the effects of domestic abuse and emotional strain.

After being expelled from high school part way through Year 8, Chris is forced to start again at a school known more for its problems than its promise. There, he tries to hide the emotional toll of his home life and the relentless responsibilities that come with it. Sketching is his refuge—a private world where he can express what he can't say out loud and release the tension he carries.

At his new school, Chris feels like an outsider at first, unsure of where he fits in. However, he unexpectedly finds support and genuine friendship among his classmates and teachers. With the help of these new connections, Chris slowly begins to build confidence and discover his true sense of self. As the story unfolds, a deep bond forms between Chris and a troubled horse he has been training. When he learns that the horse is going to be condemned, Chris makes a bold and dangerous decision—he will risk everything to rescue it. What follows is an intense and courageous journey through the rugged Australian bush. Facing natural dangers, overwhelming obstacles, and his own fears, Chris must rely on his resilience, determination, and the strength of his new friendships. Through this daring adventure, he ultimately discovers who he truly is.

The consequences of Chris's actions are life-changing. As he confronts the realities of trust, fear, and freedom, he also discovers the strength of true friendship and the power of standing up for what's right. *Racing the Wild* is a compelling and emotionally rich coming-of-age novel that weaves together themes of survival, connection, and the healing power of animals and art.

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ROSANNA FEEKEN

## THE LITERARY JOURNEY OF AUTHOR ROSANNA FEEKEN

Rosanna Andrea Feecken has spent her life deeply connected to creative expression through writing, drawing, and painting. As a professional Art Teacher, she dedicated her career to visual arts, exhibiting her paintings and contributing articles to magazines, newsletters, and websites. Her passion for creativity has always been at the heart of her work, inspiring others through both her teaching and her own artistic practice. In 2023, however, her creative journey took an exciting new turn when the idea for a novel emerged with surprising clarity. This marked the beginning of a fresh chapter in her artistic life, blending her love for storytelling with her visual imagination. Rosanna continues to explore new ways to share her creativity with a broader audience.

To shape this narrative, Feecken undertook an online fiction writing course, which provided her with the structural tools to bring her story to life. The result was her debut novel, *Racing the Wild: A Journey of Freedom and Friendship*, which follows a young protagonist, Chris, navigating personal challenges through art, friendship, animals and the Australian bush. In a unique creative decision, Feecken incorporated original sketches at the start of each

chapter, offering the impression that readers are viewing pages from Chris's own sketchbook. This visual element serves to deepen emotional engagement and highlight the therapeutic role of art in the character's journey.

Since completing the first book, Feecken has begun work on its sequel, ***Racing the Wild: Of Judgement and Deception***, which is currently half written. While continuing Chris's story, the sequel delves into more complex and nuanced themes—honesty, restorative practices, and the moral grey areas of human relationships. This second novel requires more extensive research and exploration, reflecting Feecken's commitment to authenticity and emotional depth.

Though her roots lie in the visual arts, Feecken's transition into fiction writing has opened up new avenues for creative and personal exploration. Balancing her artistic background with a growing body of literary work, she hopes to inspire and connect with audiences through layered storytelling that blends imagination, insight, and the natural world. Her second book, *Racing the Wild: Of Judgement and Deception*, is coming soon.



# THE INTERVIEW

WITH AUTHOR ROSANNA FEEKEN

## **Q: What sparked the idea for *Racing the Wild*?**

This story grew from imaginative childhood tales shared with my sisters as well as my later work as a teacher and painter. I wanted to offer hope to children facing hardship, and to explore how friendship, animals, and creativity can heal. At its heart, it's a reminder to build resilience—and to know we're never truly alone.

## **Q: How has the Australian bush shaped your writing?**

The Australian bushland stirs vivid memories—sunlit dust, the scent of rain, buzzing insects, and textured surfaces. From childhood to adulthood, I've spent countless days camping, climbing, and exploring Australia's deserts, mountains, and caves. These experiences shaped my writing. The bush inspires my creativity, reconnects me with nature, and brings a deep, lasting sense of peace.

## **Q: Are Chris and his brothers based on real people?**

Chris and his brothers are not based on real people, but I have tried to make them come to life by giving them different characteristics and behavioural patterns. Chris got his name from my beautiful departed older sister, Christina, who shared many stories with me as a child at bedtime.

## **Q: How has your experience with animals influenced the story?**

Animals have shaped my life—I've trained dogs, ridden horses, and cared for native wildlife and countless pets, from cats to a donkey. I once gave pony rides to children and watched anxious kids soften with a simple pat or nuzzle. My research into therapy and service dogs reinforces what I've long felt: their impact on people is truly invaluable.

## **Q: What was it like moving from articles to fiction?**

In articles, the writing tends to be a factual account supported by images, examples and evidence. Moving to fiction was freeing in a way that I could expand upon the descriptive writing and invent scenarios, feelings and responses. It's so much broader than reporting on a particular event or practice and allows my creativity to flow more intensely.

## **Q: How does your being a teacher impact your storytelling?**

As a teacher, I've found storytelling boosts student engagement and builds connections. It offers fresh perspectives and deepens understanding. While the school life in my book is fictional, it's grounded in reality—reflecting how staff and students might genuinely respond. I've used creative exaggeration, much like poetic licence, to heighten tension while staying true to the school experience.

## **Q: What role does nature play in your creativity?**

I've spent countless hours painting nature, with exhibitions titled *Fragments in Nature*, *Innerscape*, and *Natural Selections*. Now, as a writer, nature still guides me. Wandering the bush helps me connect with

scenes emotionally and observe details that bring writing to life. Whether drawing or writing, being in nature grounds me and deepens my creative connection.

## **Q: What themes are you exploring in this series?**

*Racing The Wild: A Journey of Freedom and Friendship* explores themes of identity, belonging, domestic violence, and resilience. Its sequel, *Racing The Wild: Of Judgement and Deception*, expands on these themes, delving into honesty, connectedness, restorative practices, and the role of animals in therapy. Both books feature a rich sense of adventure and the Australian bushland.

## **Q: Who is your ideal reader for the book?**

Initially, the book was aimed at the young adult audience but significant positive feedback from adults of all ages suggest that any reader over the age of thirteen who is interested in adventure, friendships, drama and a story of resilience could enjoy it. That said, some people may find descriptions of the domestic situations and some of the language confronting.

## **Q: How do you juggle being an author, artist, teacher, and mum?**

My children are independent now, and very supportive. I wrote my first novel while working full-time as a teacher, staying up late and using holidays to write and sketch. I didn't paint at that time. Now working part-time, I'm focusing on the sequel, which is progressing more slowly due to more in-depth research and complex themes.

## **Q: What's been the best part of publishing your first novel?**

Achieving a dream I had since writing stories for school assignments! I always thought I would write, but I ended up painting instead, with writing remaining a hidden passion until *Racing The Wild*.

## **Q: What can we expect in the next book?**

The sequel picks up where Book One left off, following Chris as he searches for identity and copes with the fallout of lost love and parental mistakes. Themes of deception, judgment, and truth emerge as he navigates new family and new activities. It's a rough road and steep learning curve—balanced by moments of adventure, discovery, and unexpected connection.

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."  
— Mark Twain