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The Memory Pool: Australian stories of summer, sun and swimming by Therese Spruhan

rating ★★★★★

These 28 Australian stories of summer, sun and swimming will stir many memories. Mine were of the municipal pool in my Far North Queensland hometown which hosted cane toads when it was emptied to just a puddle. And after having unkempt curly hair following early morning training in the pool, I stood in front of a mirror at home, wet my hair, then cut it so it looked good wet (and of course, looked vile when dry!)

All these reminiscences recorded by Australians aged from 28 to 97 included the joy of summer days spent at the pool, whether in a town, the sea, a bay, river or backyard.

Some of the memories include warm concrete, the salty freshness of an ocean pool, bombing into the water, learning to swim, socialising with friends and family, the smell of chlorine and hot chips. These are just a few of many.

Contributors range from swimming champions Shane Gould and Daniel Kowalski, as well as noted coach Lawrie Lawrence, to authors, actors, comedians, a former Tasmanian Premier, artists, magistrates, teachers and nurses.

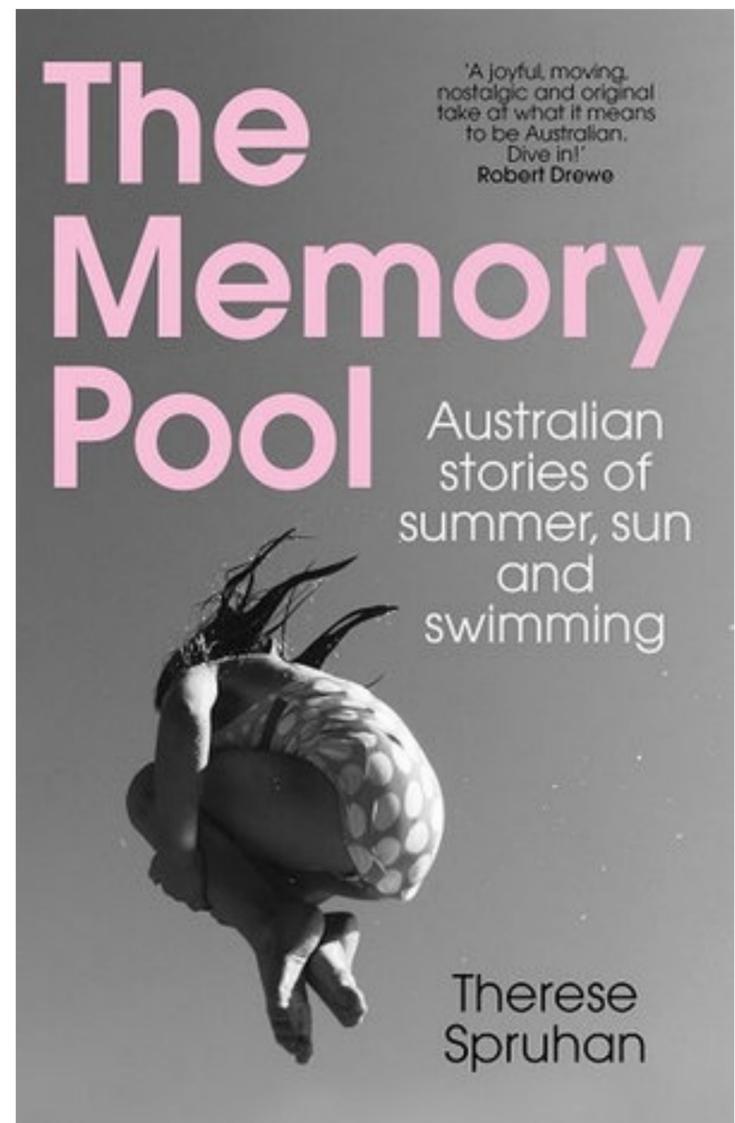
Lily Sisa helped raise money to build a pool in her town of Lightning Ridge. By 1990, the community had raised enough money, Dawn Fraser opened it, and Lily's father kept fundraising to build a waterpark and then an indoor diving centre.

Some writers mourned the loss of pools they had known as children; others told of their joy in being able to take the next generation to pools they had enjoyed so much.

For Yusra Metwally, the Greenacre and Auburn pools remain special her, particularly as she now dons a burkini to swim, enjoying women-only sessions at Auburn and at Australia's last women-only sea pool at Coogee in Sydney.

For anyone who's ever enjoyed a swim, it's certainly worth dipping into this book.

Reviewed by Jennifer Somerville



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