

## Q&A Tim Slee

Congratulations on the release of *Taking Tom Murray Home*.

Please find 5 questions below:

*Hi, have tried to write so you can cut the answers in each paragraph from the bottom up.*

- *Taking Tom Murray Home* is described as a funny, moving, bittersweet Australian story of fires, families and the restorative power of community. Can you tell us a bit more about the book?

*Above all else, I enjoy spinning yarns, and that is how I'd describe Taking Tom Murray Home, a good yarn. It was founded in a conversation I had with a dairy farmer who'd walked off his land, but I wanted to explore positive themes too, about how Australians pitch in and help each other in times of fire, flood and tragedy. Recently I read an article about a bloke in Darwin who drove 2,000 km to help a family stranded at Tennant Creek get to a sailing regatta! That's exactly the spirit I try to capture in my novel.*

- You've visited 54 countries, and lived in a number of those, and yet you've written a very Australian story, which won the inaugural Banjo Prize. Why this story?

*I loved the fact the Banjo Prize was specifically looking for an Australian story. I had this very Australian novel in the back of my head - it was just a few scratched notes on paper - and this competition was all the incentive I needed to get it written. I'd had this idea for combining the poetry of Lawson, the taunts of Ned Kelly, with a story about a family of Australian battlers, and somehow it all came together!*

- What do you hope the reader will take away from this book?

*I hope readers finish the book with the thought that no matter how tough life gets, you aren't alone. I don't mean that lightly; I know a lot of people are doing it tough, not just on the land, but in the cities too. But if you reach out a hand, there's a good chance someone will be there to help you up. A reader might have a little cry along the way with Taking Tom Murray Home, but I hope they finish with a smile on their face.*

- What's your daily writing routine like?

*I work full-time in a very demanding job, which means my writing gets wedged into the gaps in between. I'm a journalist by trade, and luckily I can write anywhere, anytime. I do a lot of intercontinental travel which is where I really get stuck in – seven to ten hours Europe to Asia or the US while other people watch movies or sleep, that's my sweet spot! I write in airport lounges, airplanes, hotels at the end of the day, and of course weekends (in between shopping, cooking for guests and family, hacking away in the garden and going to bed to read before sleeping!) I like to have two or three very different manuscripts on the go, so that if one hits a roadblock, I can keep going with another until a new idea comes to me to*

*lift the roadblock. Unlike some writers, I like to share my work-in-progress far and wide with as many people as can be bothered to read it, to get feedback and help shape it as I go along. It helps push me along when there are people waiting for the next chapter, not just the full book!*

- What are you working on at the moment?

*As usual, I have three or four manuscripts on the go. I'm writing a follow-up to Taking Tom Murray Home, and just finished the first draft. It's about a group of friends who go down the Franklin River in their 20s, it goes horribly wrong, and then they meet up again thirty years later in very different circumstances. Then, because I have that 'dreaded second novel' fear, I'm writing treatments for two others! One is a variation on the same theme from a different point of view, while the third is about a guerilla art collective that stages a takeover of an old Sydney industrial site and refuses to leave – for 10 years. Oh, and I also write thrillers for charity, on Amazon (under the pen name FX Holden) so I am on the final chapters of my next big fat thriller too, which should be out in November.*