

Looking back:
Author and
journalist Robert
Reid now and
(far right) as a
16-year-old lad
embarking on
his career.



Robert Reid

Robert Reid is the author of five non-fiction books, his newest "Shark! Killer Tales from the Dangerous Depths" is out in December. Before becoming an author he was a freelance journalist and a former Cairns bureau chief for The Courier-Mail.

Dear Bob,

Well, you are now 16 and in your first job. Yes, a pen pusher in an office, and no doubt your mind completely occupied with the thought of girls. And, of course, drinking beer with your mates and planning to escape Tasmania at the earliest opportunity.

I could chasten you about underage drinking, but it wouldn't make the slightest difference. As for the girls, well go for it. May there be many of them in your future.

But try and remember, as you embark on your personal journey, that life is very short. You see it as endless, with the thought of death no more than an abstract concept, but in reality it is a blink of an eye in the grand scheme of things –

whatever that may be.

You may discover a talent within yourself, or a desire to achieve something special, or a dream that seems so nebulous as to be impossible to realise. But keep whatever it is that makes you different, a unique individual, in the corridors of your mind, and whatever else you do, chase it down. If you believe in it with fierce passion, it will happen.

Apart from all that, don't lose sight of the wonders of your youth, and the sheer excitement it will provide. You will walk but once along that adventurous road. Make sure you enjoy it, so that one day you will look back and marvel at the fun times, the friends and lovers, and the daring escapades you shouldn't have attempted, but just got away with!

Try not to hurt people, or otherwise do things you will later regret. A guilty mind is a terrible thing, and will surely haunt you. You are the boss of your destiny. Be wise. End of sermon, Bob. Hope I haven't bored you too much. With love and affection from your future self,

Robert



Hayley Gillespie

Born in London in 1972, Hayley Gillespie moved to sunny Cairns in 1996. She has been a professional artist since 1989, in a variety of guises – from theatre and set design, artwork for London Council and Royal Parks, and designing and decorating children's furniture for the exclusive retail stores of London. In Australia she has built a reputation for telling deeply thoughtful (and sometimes secretly sinister) stories through her quirky canvas paintings, which draw inspiration from her own childhood in the '70s as well as Australia's colours and lifestyle. You can spot these vibrant depictions all throughout Cairns, but much of Hayley's work finds itself in foreign collections throughout the world. She has a live model (her son Noah) who comes home from school every day, full of material, which is incorporated into her work.

Dear Me,

What on earth are you doing? You're supposed to be concentrating on your college work? Oh my God, your poor mother. Didn't you think she might want to know where you were at 5am in the morning?

Look, I have come back from the future to set you right about a few things. I want you to know that you don't have to grow up so fast. Now I am all grown up, I am stuck here. And you won't always think children are disgusting and smelly. In fact, you'll have one of your own. Although he probably is both of those things, you don't even mind. You even prefer children to most adults.

Don't think the world will give, or owes, you anything. The only things you will get in your life will come from grabbing with both hands – confidently and wholeheartedly.

Don't be lazy, life is too short and there are too many things to do. Enjoy working hard – it is rewarding. Oh, and don't lift all that heavy stuff your grandfather told you not to – you are paying for it now.

Don't ever be scared to try anything. You

always think you can't do things, even now sometimes, but you can, just give it a go. You will go on to have all sorts of terrifying adventures that your mother still does not know about.

Bad things will happen, that is life. Accept it, learn from it and move on. It doesn't mean you are cursed. People you love will die. Even you will one day (so drive carefully next year). You are not invincible, and you really do think you are. Enjoy your family because you leave them on the other side of the world. Don't follow fashion, it looks ridiculous in photos, and Mum still has them hanging in the hallway.

Thank you for leaving me with that immature sense of humour, free spirit and sense of daring – which lands me in trouble even now. The world is still the same sparkly toy shop it was back then, except with bills and laughter lines.

Be kinder to boys, because if anyone treats my son the way you treat boys, there will be trouble. And, finally, don't wish your life away – only yesterday I was you. You will see me too soon.

I still remember you ...

Hayley

