



# [The garden of hopes and dreams]

By Barbara Hannay

## Genre and Subject

*Australian fiction*  
*Communities -- Queensland -- Australia -- Fiction*  
*Widows -- Fiction*  
*Friendship -- Fiction*

## Synopsis

The residents in Brisbane's Riverview apartment block barely know each other. They have no idea of the loneliness, the lost hopes and dreams, being experienced behind their neighbours' closed doors. Vera, now widowed, is trying her hardest to create a new life for herself in an unfamiliar city environment. Unlucky-in-love Maddie has been hurt too many times by untrustworthy men, yet refuses to give up on romance. Ned, a reclusive scientist, has an unusual interest in bees and worm farms. Meanwhile, the building's caretaker, Jock, is quietly nursing a secret dream. When a couple of gardening enthusiasts from one of the apartments suggest they all create a communal garden on their rooftop, no one is interested. Not at first, anyway. But as the residents come together over their budding plants and produce, their lives become interconnected in ways they could never have imagined.

## Author Biography

*Barbara Hannay writes women's fiction, with over twelve million books sold worldwide. Her novels set in Australia have been translated into twenty-six languages, and she has won the Romance Writers of America's RITA award and been shortlisted five times. Two of Barbara's novels have also won the Romance Writers of Australia's Romantic Book of the Year award.*

*Barbara lives in Townsville with her writer husband and enjoys being close to the Coral Sea, the stunning tropical scenery and colourful characters, all of which find their way into her popular stories.*

## Discussion Starters

1. In what ways does this book explore loneliness?
2. Do you think Vera's decision to move to a city apartment from the country location she had known for much of her life was the right one? Discuss the pros and cons of a major life change after being widowed.
3. When Vera first moves to Brisbane, she wonders, 'Why on earth would lively young people want to dine with an ancient old stick they don't even know?' Why do you think?
4. What role does Henry play in bringing the residents of the Riverview apartment block together, and indeed in bringing his own family together?
5. Why do you think Maddie's philodendron became so important to her? Do you have any plants that you are sentimental about?
6. Discuss the importance of community and connection as they apply to the different characters in this book.
7. Vera says: 'I've always thought of plants as reliable. They inevitably do their best.' What do you think she was implying, and why?
8. Which character did you learn the most from in this story and why?
9. 'Just remember, we're all here for you, Jock. The residents here all care about you – especially the gardeners.' Can such sentiments really help someone in a genuine crisis situation?
10. What lessons do Joe and Dennis have to teach the other residents about love?
11. How well do you know your neighbours? Do you think this is important, or just a nice fantasy?
12. What recurring themes did you identify in this novel and other books by Barbara Hannay?

## If you liked this book, you may also like...

- *The Wattle island book club* by Sandie Docker
- *Thursdays at Orange Blossom house* by Sophie Green