

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Report 2020

ACT Writers Centre Inc.

ABN 31 707 029 530

ACT Writers

PO Box 63, Dickson ACT 2602

(02) 6974 2289

admin@actwriters.org

actwriters.org



COPYRIGHTAGENCY

ACT Writers is supported by the ACT Government through artsACT and The Copyright Agency through its Cultural Fund.

ACT Writers is also supported by the University of Canberra, UNSW Canberra, Eden Road Wines, Paperchain Bookstore, Harry Hartog Booksellers ANU and Bytes 'n Colours.

ACT Writers appreciates its ongoing partnerships with the FNAWN, Poetry on the Move Festival, The Street Theatre, and Craft ACT/Design Canberra.

The ACT Writers Centre is a member of the Ainslie + Gorman Arts Centres.

The ACT Writers Centre acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples of the Canberra Region as the traditional custodians of this land. We also acknowledge all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and create.

Annual Report design and layout: Katy Mutton

CONTENTS

CEO's Report	4
ACTW Staff	6
Chair's Report	8
ACTW Patron and Board of Management	10
In Numbers	12
ACT Writing and Publishing Awards	14
Public Events	16
Member Achievements	17
ACTW Programs and Events	19
Between the (on) Lines	20
ACT Writer-in-Residence	21
Sector Advocacy	22
Staff Code of Conduct	24
Financial Report	26



2020 was a year that began with trauma and instability. Coming on the heels of the catastrophic Summer of Bushfires, the COVID-19 Pandemic affected our social and economic fortunes, and altered how many sectors, including the arts, operated. The disruption of COVID-19 exposed vulnerabilities within our organisation, as it did with many. But it also fostered the need to respond with creative, innovative solutions, and provided the opportunity to ensure ACT Writers operated on solid foundations. As social distancing became a necessity, the decision was made for our team to work from home from March 2020. As we evaluated ways to adapt our services, ACT Writers leveraged a valuable change of pace to redefine how it would choose to operate as an organisation moving forward.

As always, we are grateful for the support and collaboration of our funders and partners, especially in 2020 as the arts sector rallied together. ACT Writers would like to thank artsACT, the Copyright Agency, Harry Hartog ANU, the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the University of Canberra and libraries ACT. We are also grateful for the support of The Street Theatre, New Best Friend, Bytes N Colours and Eden Road Wines.

ACT Writers were fortunate to receive vital government funding support in the form of rent assistance, ATO cashflow boost and Job Keeper. This support, combined with careful and strategic financial management and planning enabled us to strengthen core organisational structures and deliver flexible and professional offerings to our members and audiences. ACT Writers acted to significantly reduce its overheads without compromising on its quality services and responsibility to provide current, relevant information about the Australian writing and publishing environment.

These actions, combined with an overhaul of our board of directors, means we have constructively improved our operations as a Key Arts Organisation. ACT Writers identified the opportunity to create a job share for our marketing and communications roles, bringing the writers centre staff FTE up to 2.4. This improvement in human resources supports ACT Writers to work within our means, while prioritising program delivery and quality events that respond to the needs of our audiences.

ACT Writers also acted to create, formalise and implement a number of new operational policies. These policies relate to fiscal transparency, clear staff autonomy and a code of conduct that ensures that ACT Writers will always be a safe and inclusive space.

The foundations laid in 2020 will inform ACT Writers' intention to transition to providing relevant, adaptive and high quality professional and creative development resources as a digital organisation. This move will further reduce expenditure without compromising quality service and support for writers.

2020 showed us that our programming was not as diverse and accessible as it could be. Moving forward inclusion and accessibility are two of ACT Writers' core values. We are committed to developing advisory boards featuring voices from both our community and the industry to ensure our programs reflect and serve the ACT region's vibrant artistic landscape.

The ACT Writers team demonstrated their resilience and commitment to Canberra writers throughout 2020. It is thanks to their talent and work ethic that ACT Writers were able to recalibrate and provide adaptive programs that suited the sector's evolving needs, while maintaining appropriate COVID-19 safety measures. My sincere thanks to Jerzy Beaumont, Claire Delahunty, Nigel Featherstone and Katy Mutton.

A special thank you also to our newly appointed Board for their support, guidance, passion and trust in the team. Our sincere gratitude to the dedicated members who stuck by us during this time of challenge and change, and supported us in preparing for the next 25 years as the peak body for writing-based culture in the ACT.

Meg Wilson

Director
ACT Writers



MEG WILSON CEO

Meg is the ACT Writers CEO. Meg holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Canberra where she majored in creative writing and advertising. Meg's passion for story telling traverses multiple mediums, with her two favourites being prose and broadcasting.

Meg is a passionate arts advocate and emerging arts leader. She is dedicated to making it easier for local writers, artists and creators to hone their craft and build sustainable, enriching careers. Meg aspires to continue to shape and develop Canberra's creative community.

JERZY BEAUMONT Operations Manager

Jerzy 'Brojay' Beaumont's evolving role at the Centre includes coordinating memberships and facilitating our workshops & events. He also operates as the main point of contact for many of our member interactions. He was formerly the team's administrative officer and acted as programs manager from May to July in 2019.

Beginning his writing career as a slam poet, Jerzy represented the ACT at the 2017 Australian Poetry Slam finals. As a spoken word poet he has performed his work on a local, interstate, and international level, been published in various journals including the Australian Poetry Journal and Cordite, and now operates as Editor in Chief for Bareknuckle Poet Journal of Letters. Jerzy has proved to be a tireless devotee to supporting the writing community, and loves nothing more than connecting creatives to the audiences who need to receive their craft.

CLAIRE DELAHUNTY Communications Manager

From the boardrooms of Melbourne to the cattle yards of Katherine, Claire has loved travelling and reporting on an eclectic range of subjects. She is an experienced journalist and writer who enjoys finding the extraordinary in every-day things. She has covered beats including business, financial markets, agriculture, community and the arts. As a communications consultant based in Australia and South East Asia, she has created content for specialist fields including infrastructure, science, literature, and leadership.

Claire holds a Bachelor of Journalism (hons) from La Trobe University. Her creative writing has been highly commended in the ACT Writers Centre's own Michael Thwaites Poetry Award and Marjorie Graber-McInnis Short Story Award. She has had works long-listed for the 2016 Caledonia Novel Award and the 2017 Fish Poetry Award. She is also the co-developer of a poetry anthology exploring the embodied experience of childbearing.

NIGEL FEATHERSTONE Creative Producer

Nigel is a literary arts worker and author. From 2014 to 2019, he was the director of HARDCOPY, the national emerging writers development program funded by the Australia Council and the flagship initiative of ACT Writers. He initiated and currently delivers three programs: Between the Lines, New Territory and the ACT Writer-in-Residence Program.

His novel Bodies of Men was published by Hachette Australia in 2019 and was shortlisted in the 2019 Queensland Literary Awards. In 2015 the Goulburn Regional Conservatorium commissioned Nigel to write the libretto for a full-length song cycle with the score being composed by James Humberstone from the Sydney Conservatorium; The Weight of Light had its world premiere at The Street Theatre in 2018. Nigel has also written an award-winning series of novellas published by Blemish Books (2011, 2012, 2014), and 50 short stories published in Australian literary journals including Meanjin, Island, and the Review of Australian Fiction; his creative non-fiction is widely publishing, appearing in the Canberra Times, Overland and 3:AM Magazine, among other outlets.

Nigel has been awarded four Canberra Critics Circle Awards and given residencies at Varuna and Bundanon; in 2013 he was a Creative Fellow at UNSW Canberra, where he continues as a Visiting Fellow. He is represented by Gaby Naher, Left Bank Literary, Sydney.

KATY MUTTON Marketing Manager

Katy has extensive experience working in programs and communications across the not-for-profit sector with a focus on the arts. She has previously worked for Art Monthly Australia Magazine, Megalo Print Studio + Gallery, and Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres. She holds degrees in both Architectural Design and the Visual Arts and worked for many years in the Architectural sector, specialising in sustainable design, and as a freelance Graphic Designer.

Katy is also a well-respected inter-disciplinary visual arts practitioner who has exhibited widely over the last decade. She has received many awards for her creative practice including two Canberra Critics Circle awards (2017, 2014), Michael Hobbs OAM People's Choice Award (2020), and the Rosalie Gascoigne Memorial Award from the Capital Arts Patrons Organisation (2018).

OUTGOING STAFF MEMBERS

PAUL BISSETT Director (resigned January 2020)



For ACT Writers, the challenges of 2020 ushered in a necessary year of deep strategic planning. Our Board and team examined every part of our operations to ensure we serve and advocate for the ACT region's writing community in the way it deserves. Everything we do now comes back to our new core values: Creative Development; Community Engagement; Diversity, Accessibility and Inclusion; Integrity; and Sustainability. We are in the final stages of developing our next business plan, which we are excited to share with you in the second half of 2021.

As part of this process, we overhauled the way we handle our financial operations. Despite being in a very precarious position in mid-2020, we finish the year with an extremely strong surplus. We acknowledge the impact of government support initiatives and emergency support funding from artsACT, which allowed us the opportunity to examine all of our expenditure and income, and forge a new path ahead. We finish the year with considered and strategic fiscal management and replenished reserves.

This year, we made a commitment to our membership and community that we would serve writers from all backgrounds, including those from marginalised communities. We embraced our position as an advocacy organisation, standing up for diversity and inclusion. We also made a number of structural changes within our organisation, including establishing a Code of Conduct for our Board, staff, members and attendees to create a safe and harassment-free environment; ensuring over 50% of presenters in our 2021 program are from marginalised communities; and budgeted for a diverse paid advisory board which will commence in the second half of 2021.

In December, we were thrilled to appoint Meg Wilson as Chief Executive Officer after an extensive, competitive hiring process. Meg is an experienced arts administrator who expertly managed ACT Writers through the turbulent Covid-19 period as Interim Director. We look forward to the future of ACT Writers under her vibrant leadership and strategic leadership. Meg leads a brilliant and dedicated team of

arts professionals, whom we pass on our most heartfelt thanks. The hard work and expertise of Jerzy Beaumont, Claire Delahunty, Katy Mutton and Nigel Featherstone is the backbone of this organisation.

It has been a pleasure to work with our skilled and hardworking Board, with backgrounds across writing, publishing, bookselling and journalism, plus accounting, marketing and business. Alex Sloan, Deb Stevens, Thao Le, Ann Poole, Zoya Patel and Deb Stevens. Their dedication to ACT Writers and its community over the last year has been endless, and Canberra's arts scene has been richer for it.

We sadly must say farewell to those whose mark on ACT Writers will be felt for many years to come. We thank outgoing Director Paul Bissett, Chair Abra Pressler and Board members Jennifer Sullivan, Blessy Pascual-Gutierrez, Kathie Barnes, Arthur Marusevich and Sharon Flanigan for their service and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Covid-19 brought significant financial instability to the arts, but it is important to remember that these are not new problems. It has always been very difficult for writers and artists to make money from their work. We need to focus on inclusion and support for writers of all kinds and from all backgrounds to build on the artistic vibrancy and incredible work that has shaped Canberra's arts scene over the 26 years since ACT Writers was founded.

Despite all of the challenges of 2020, it has been art that has pulled us through. It is so inspiring to see that our writers have kept writing and our community has pulled together. It is a humbling privilege to serve this community, and we look forward to doing so in 2021 and beyond.

Sophie Mannix

Chair
ACT Writers



ACT WRITERS PATRON

MARION HALLIGAN

Marion Halligan was born in Newcastle NSW, by the sea, and has lived most of her adult life in Canberra, with periods in Paris. Marion Halligan has published some 20 books. One of Australia's most important writers, she was awarded an AM in 2006. She believes fiction illuminates our lives, and for this reason she loves to read it as well as write it. In 2006, Marion Halligan was awarded an AM for her services to literature.

ACTW BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

SOPHIE MANNIX - Chair

Sophie is a writing and publishing industry professional who currently works at Text Publishing. For over five years, she worked at ACT Writers in a variety of positions. Sophie brings her extensive operational knowledge of the Centre and deep connection with the Canberra writing scene, alongside a background in marketing, administration and programming. She has also worked as the Store Manager at Harry Hartog Woden and as Communications Coordinator for Noted Writers Festival.

ALEX SLOAN - Deputy Chair

Alex Sloan is a former ABC broadcaster and has great connection to the Canberra writing community, including moderating author conversations at both the National Library of Australia and the Australian National University. Recent conversations include Helen Ennis and Karen Viggers. Alex was named 2017 Canberra Citizen of the Year for her radio, charity work.

THAO LE

Thao is a financial management expert with a strong background in the public sector. She has extensive experience providing strategic leadership and management as a senior finance executive in a range of organisational settings. Thao currently works at the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate as Chief Financial Officer and Chief Information Officer. She had a pivotal role in leading her workplace's response to COVID-19, including implementing a remote working framework.

Thao is passionate about implementing improvements to business, governance and risk-mitigation strategies to ensure the sound financial management of organisations. She is a proponent of the role of digital transformation and automation in streamlining business processes. Thao is a committed advocate for diversity in the workplace.

ZOYA PATEL

Zoya Patel is the award-winning author of *No Country Woman*, a memoir of race, religion and feminism. She is also the founder of feminist literary organisation, Feminartsy and co-host of the Margin Notes podcast alongside Yen Eriksen. Zoya has won numerous awards for her writing and editing, and has been published widely, including in *The Guardian*, the *Australian Financial Review*, ABC, SBS, *Junkee*, *Overland*, *Meanjin*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and more. She was a 2020 judge for the Stella Prize, and is the inaugural ACT Stella Schools Ambassador.

KATARINA PEARSON

After studying English literature, phonetics and linguistics at the Belgrade University of Philology, Katarina moved to Australia in the early 90's with a well-established interest and passion for literature. Having come from a bookselling background with her grandfather establishing bookshops in Belgradia in the 1930's, she has been an active member of the Canberra literary community since her arrival in the Capital in the early 90's. Having helped develop and subsequently owned Electric Shadows Bookshop over a period of 25 years she has been a strong advocate in supporting the Arts in Canberra with a focus on local authors and independent publishers. Since March 2019, Katarina has been appointed Literary Events Coordinator for the new Harry Hartog Bookshop at the Australian National University.

ANN POOLE

Ann, as an accountant, has worked in the not-for-profit, private and public sectors. She has held voluntary board and committee positions for numerous organisations, including as Megalo's Treasurer for seven years. Ann's wide and varied career and voluntary work provides her with an understanding of the good and bad times an organisation can experience. Ann brings an external perspective to ACT Writers, not being involved in the writing industry. Her love of the arts propels her to assist artists in whatever way she can.

DEB STEVENS

As an isolated rural child doing correspondence, reading was my entree into the world. A part time job with the former Mary Martins chain seduced me into the book trade. Work in various bookshops including owning one, lead to work as an independent sales agent representing Allen & Unwin and other publishers in the ACT and SE NSW. Over the eighteen years working with publishers, booksellers, authors and readers I developed a deep passion for Australian writing and publishing. My primary focus being support of local writers and encouraging connection between them, the booksellers and readers.

OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

ABRA PRESSLER Chair

DR. KATHIE BARNES

BERNADETTE PONT Treasurer

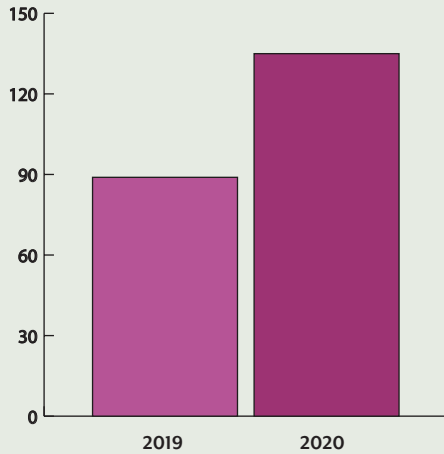
SHARON FLANIGAN

JENNIFER SULLIVAN Secretary

ARTHUR MARUSEVICH

ANNUAL AWARDS

AWARD ENTRIES



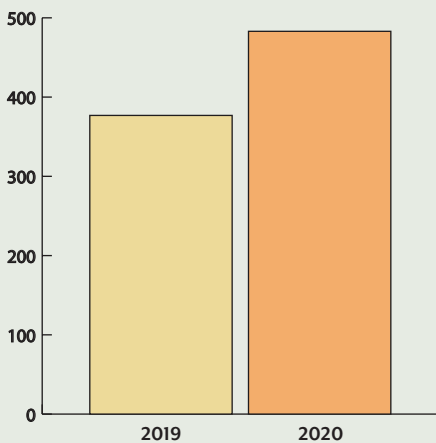
In 2020 we experienced a 52% increase in entries to our Annual Writing Awards.

As part of this we saw a marked increase in interstate applications for the June Shenfield Poetry Award.

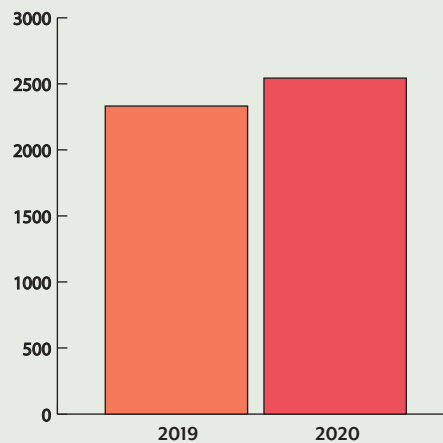
MEMBERSHIP + SUBSCRIBERS

During 2020 we observed a 28% increase in membership with a total membership income of \$16,682. We also saw a 9% increase in general e-newsletter subscribers.

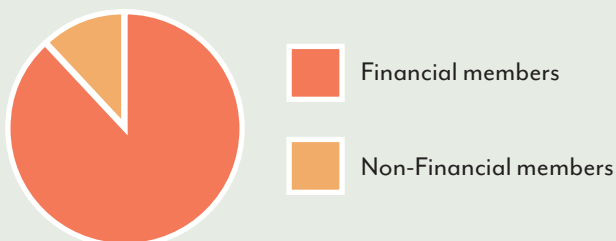
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH



ENEWS SUBSCRIBER GROWTH



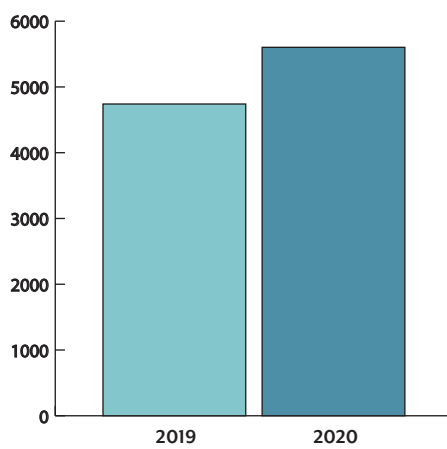
MEMBERSHIP



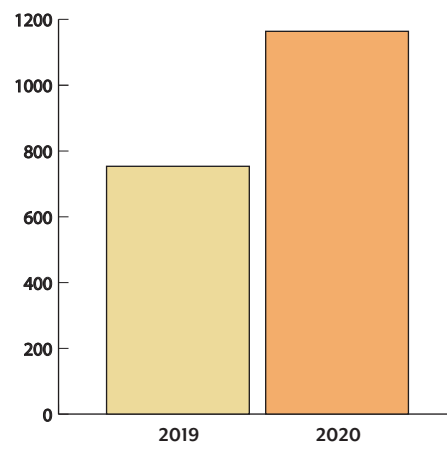
MEDIA GROWTH

While 2020 was a challenging year for the arts our social media channels were busier than ever. Most particularly we experienced a significant uptake of instagram followers. While our Twitter followers saw a steady increase retweets of our content, mentions and engagements were at an all time high.

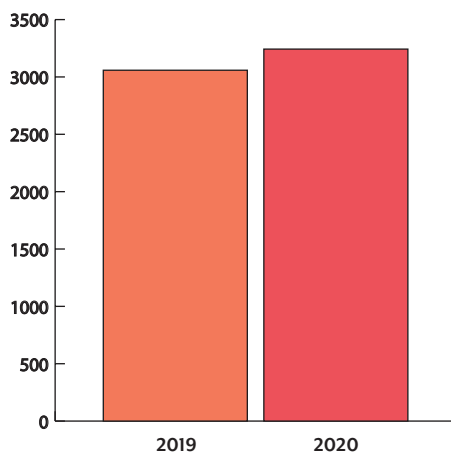
FACEBOOK PAGE LIKES



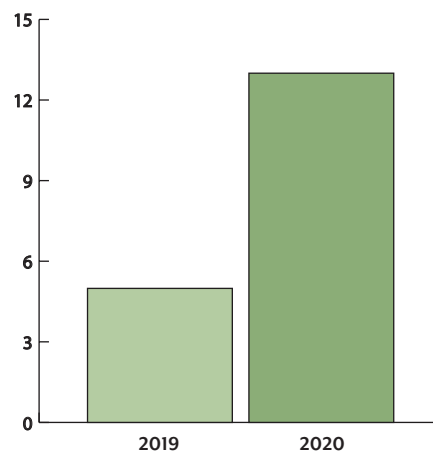
INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS



TWITTER FOLLOWERS



MAINSTREAM MEDIA MENTIONS



The Anne Edgeworth Emerging Writer's Fellowship

The Anne Edgeworth Emerging Writer's Fellowship is provided to an emerging writer in the ACT Region. The Fellowship is worth up to \$5,000 and is to be used to advance the recipients' development in the craft of writing. The Fellowship is provided annually by the Anne Edgeworth Trust and administered by ACT Writers.

This year two fellowships were awarded:

2020 Fellowship recipient Natalie Cook

2020 Fellowship recipient Emilie Morscheck

The June Shenfield National Poetry Awards

First Place Elanna Herbert (NSW) for *Part of its trunk*

Second Place Carmel Summers (ACT) for *Paper Daisies*

Third Place Carla de Goede (VIC) for *The Cleaning Woman*

Judged by Judith Nangala Crispin and Scott-Patrick Mitchell

Marjorie Graber-McInnis Short Story Award

Award Winner Sophie Clews for *Bygone*

"Winning this award is a wonderful validation of my work, but also something that encourages me to keep on writing, and to keep pushing myself to explore new ideas through my work. I have always used writing to help process and navigate difficult situations and emotions, so writing this story and winning this award is also a reminder of how important the arts and humanities are to helping us understand ourselves and our place in the world."

- Sophie Clews

Highly Commended Mick Donaldson for *The Navigators*

Highly Commended Ian Hart for *Vertical*

Highly Commended Deborah Huff-Horwood for *The Suitcase*

Judged by Beatrice Smith

Fiction Award Winner

2020 Andrew Einspruch for *The Light Bearer* (Wild Pure Heart)

Highly Commended Lisa Cassidy *A Tale of Stars and Shadow* (Tate House)

Highly Commended Amy Laurens *How Not To Acquire A Castle* (Inkprint Press)

Highly Commended Kaaron Warren *Into Bones like Oil* (Meerkat Press)

Judged by Andrew Hutinson and Leife Shallcross

Nonfiction Award Winner

2020 George Quinn for *Bandit Saints of Java* (Monsoon Books Ltd)

“Bandit Saints of Java is a readable, well-researched, and interesting study of Javanese culture and religion. Through first-person reportage, evocative description, and sometimes wry observation, Quinn weaves a colourful story about pilgrimage sites and saints in Java. There is a palpable bedrock of scholarship throughout, but it is freshly rendered into his account. A very enjoyable book.” - Judges Comments

Highly Commended Rob Donnelly *OUT OF ORDER* (Create the Day)

Highly Commended Toni Hassan *Families in the Digital Age* (Hybrid Publishers)

Judged by Helen Ennis and Patrick Mullins

Children’s Book Award Winner

2020 Tania McCartney *Fauna: Australia’s Most Curious Creatures* (NLA Publishing)

“In Fauna: Australia’s Most Curious Creatures author and illustrator Tania McCartney celebrates Australia’s much-loved native fauna in a unique and exquisitely intriguing manner. This beautifully crafted non-fiction picture book explores animal conservation and the sheer magnitude of Australia’s magnificent animal species in a way that is respectful and reflective of the books target audience. With a clever sprinkle of humour and subtle richness of language, it is sure to charm all readers.” - excerpt from Judges Comments

Highly Commended Tracey Hawkins & Anil Tortop *Leaping Lola* (New Frontier Publishing)

Judged by Leanne Barrett and Jacqueline de Rose-Ahern

Poetry Award Winner

2020 Sandra Renew for *Acting Like A Girl* (Recent Work Press)

Acting Like a Girl. From its deceptively declamatory opening poem, ‘Trust what I tell you. / I am here to describe / one of the greatest discoveries / that has ever been made’ this collection brings a muscular and well-dressed strength to its examination of gender, while revealing the protagonist’s vulnerabilities as equally robust. The book maintains an un-veering focus, and drawn from a series of interviews it develops a historical artifact that shows the reader a multitude of experiences while taking no prisoners - excerpt from Judges Comments

Highly Commended Cham Zhi Yi *blur by the* (Subbed In)

Highly Commended Suzanne Edgar *Catching the Light* (Ginninderra Press)

Judged by Andrew Galan and Eleanor Malbon

PUBLIC EVENTS

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic across the Arts sector meant there were far fewer opportunities to get out and about in person in the community. Thus when opportunities presented themselves it was a delight to get out and celebrate the achievements of writers from the ACT region. While many events were cancelled altogether we were pleased that the Canberra Critics Circle Awards were able to go ahead in 2020. Held at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the annual awards celebrate originality, excellence, energy and creativity in our region. The 2020 awards for literature were given as follows:

Helen Ennis for her profoundly moving, and powerful biography of pioneering Australian photographer Olive Cotton *Olive Cotton: A Life in Photography*, published by Harper Collins. The book also won The University of Queensland Non-Fiction Book Award 2020.

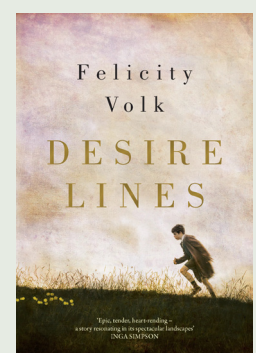
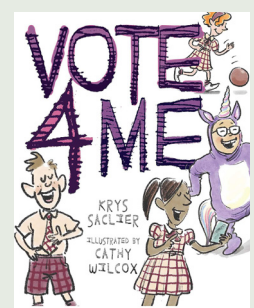
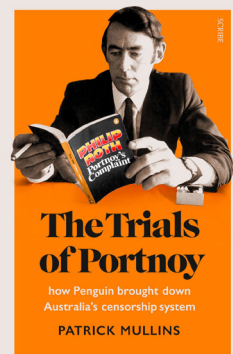
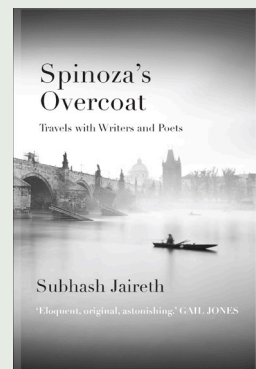
Subhash Jaireth for his innovative workshops at Poetry on the Move in October 2019 on the increasingly important skill of poetry translation seen in his book, *Rain Clouds: Love songs of Meerabai*, published by Recent Work Press in August 2020.

Patrick Mullins for *The Trials of Portnoy* (Scribe Publications), which tells the story of Penguin Australia's fight to print Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, successfully contesting Australia's censorship laws.

Krys Saclier for her children's picture book *Vote 4 Me* which explains the preferential voting system. Illustrated by political cartoonist, Cathy Wilcox.

Felicity Volk for her novel *Desire Lines*, a finely drawn and refreshing love story, balancing international adventures with local intricacies.

We were also fortunate to finally attend the previously postponed launch of Anni Doyle Wawrzynczak's first book, *How Local Art Made Australia's National Capital* (ANU Press). The opening was held at Canberra Contemporary Art Space in their new gallery space in Parkes. It included a panel discussion facilitated by ACTW Deputy Chair Alex Sloan.



L-R - Felicity Volk, Patrick Mullins, Helen Ennis, Subhash Jaireth, Jerzy Beaumont (on behalf of Krys Saclier)



L-R - Katy Mutton and Nigel Featherstone (ACTW)



L-R - Alex Sloan, Anni Doyle Wawrzynczak, Deborah Clark at Canberra Contemporary Arts Space (CCAS)

The ACT Writers team were also excited to be among the lucky crowd at Smith's Alternative in September for the launch of new works by Shane Strange, Martin Dolan and Melinda Smith. Over 70 others joined the evening via Zoom – a testament to Canberra's largesse of poetic talent.

Celebrated poet, Penelope Layland, emceed the evening. Recent Work Press's Shane Strange stood on the stage as poet, rather than publisher, to read from his debut collection, *All Suspicions Have Been Confirmed*. Martin Dolan's *Sleeping Dogs* drew listeners into the pages of mythology, reimagining the epic of Gilgamesh. Then Melinda Smith led an utterly focused audience as she read from her seventh poetry collection, *Man-handled*, which explores both verbal and physical gendered violence. Smith's continues to prove itself, as ever, a wonderful venue for intimate poetry readings, while the presence of digital listeners was wrapped easily into the physical audience.



L-R - Shane Strange, Melinda Smith and Martin Dolan



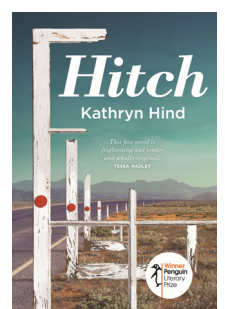
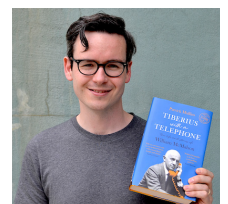
L-R - Shane Strange reading his work at Smith's Alternative

MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the hardships and challenges of 2020 across sectors, there were still many reasons to celebrate as many ACT Writers members and HARDCOPY program alumni experienced a myriad of successes in 2020. Here we celebrate just some of those achieved.

ACT Writers member Patrick Mullins, a facilitator of our Between the Lines program, won the prestigious National Biography Award for his biography of William McMahon, *Tiberius with a Telephone*. Following this, he also won the 2020 NSW Premier's Award for his nonfiction publication *The Trials of Portnoy*. It was also fantastic to hear that Kathryn Hind was named 2020 Betty Trask Prize Winner for her debut novel *Hitch*.

Secrets from the Green Room podcast was launched by long-time members Craig Cormick and Irma Gold in September 2020, supported by ACT Writers. It is an exciting new creative venture where they chat with writers about their experience of the writing and publishing process in an honest green room-style. Season One featured interviews with James Bradley, Chris Hammer, Anna Spargo-Ryan, Karen Viggers, and Holden Sheppard.



MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

ACT Writers member Melinda Smith received artsACT funding to research and draft her poetry manuscript on memory loss *Coming Unmothered*, and ACT Writers member Samuel Townsend (HC19) received funding to assist him to complete his manuscript, *From Sir, With Love*, a memoir of a queer teacher. Our own Creative Producer, Nigel Featherstone, along with Robyn Cadwallader and Julie Keys were awarded the inaugural Write North Writers' Group Residency - a great opportunity and fantastic recognition.

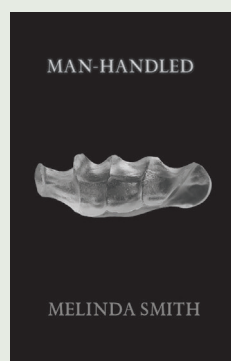
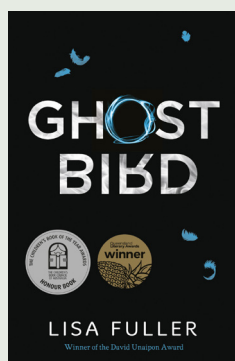
Peter Papathanasiou (HC14) and Annie Barrett (HC15) were both selected to take part in the QLD Writers Centre's Publishable Manuscript Development Program, and Hayley Scrivener (HC18) was shortlisted in the 2020 Kill Your Darlings Unpublished Manuscript Award.

2019 ACT Writer-in-Residence and ACT Writers member Angela Gardner was published in The Yale Review during the year. Angela also released a new book *Some Sketchy Notes on Matter* which was published by Recent Work Press. ACT Writers member Lucy Alexander (HC19) launched her book of poetry titled *Strokes of Light* also published by Recent Work Press.

ACT Writers member Lisa Fuller, released her debut novel, *Ghost Bird* to critical acclaim picking up a sweep of awards including Winner 2020 Queensland Literary Awards – Griffith University Young Adult Book Award, Winner, 2020 Norma K Hemming Award – Long Work, Honour Book, 2020 CBCA Book of the Year Awards – Book of the Year: Older Readers, and the Readings Young Adult Book Prize for 2020. Lisa is a Wuilli Wuilli woman from Eidsvold, Queensland, and is also descended from Gooreng Gooreng and Wakka Wakka peoples.

Congratulations was also due to academic, novelist and ACT Writers member Alison Booth whose novel *The Philosophers Daughters* was released in 2020, published through Red Door Press. And we saw exciting book-to-screen adaptations in the works for two talented Canberra authors. Adaptations of Peter Papathanasiou's (HC14) memoir *Little One* (A&U) and Kaaron Warren's fantasy novel *The Grief Hole* (IFWG Publishing Australia) were selected to receive investment from Screen Canberra.

On a Barbarous Coast was published by Allen and Unwin in June. The novel is an alternative retelling of Captain James Cook's story co-written by ACT Writers member, and former Chair, Craig Cormick and Harold Ludwick in the tradition of imagined histories. Harold Ludwick is a Bulgun Warra man from the Guugu Yimidhirr & Kuku Yalandji nations in far north Queensland. and was recipient of the prestigious Encounters Fellowship with the National Museum of Australia.



L-R - Craig Cormick and Harold Ludwick

CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

Following the impact of COVID-19 ACTW adjusted their creative workshop series to be delivered via a digital platform. 4 programs were able to be adapted for digital delivery. These programs were chosen to ensure that the digital delivery would be at the highest standard and allowed ACTW to deliver programs in a COVID safe manner. Our facilitators for our creative workshops were Aleesah Darlison, Kathryn Heyman, Alex Adsett and Irma Gold respectively.

MASTERCLASS SERIES

Part of our digital adaption included trialling a new pilot series of masterclasses. The series was designed to support emerging and developing writers in the ACT region. We kept the sessions of each masterclass short to to accommodate those creatives experiencing creative fatigue. To allow participants to fully absorb what they learnt and apply the concepts we divided the masterclasses into multiple sessions. The facilitators of the masterclass series were Melinda Smith, Nadine Davidoff and Mary Cunnane.



Benjamin Law opens up for an Ask me Anything session



Irma Gold as Zoom presenter



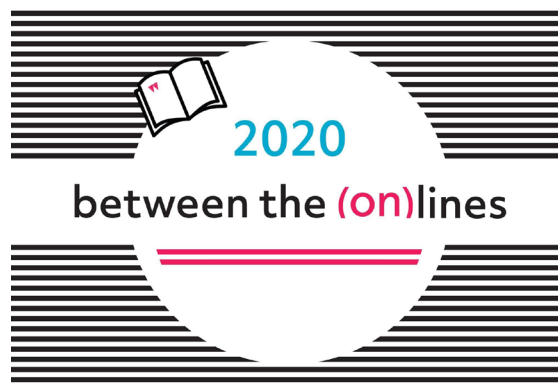
Mary Cunnane

TITLE	#	HOST
Ask Anything About Writing	17	Benjamin Law
Mary Cunnane's Publishing School	15	Mary Cunnane
Manuscript Masterclass	15	Nadine Davidoff
Self-Editing	16	Irma Gold
Pitching, Agents & Business of Publishing	25	Alex Adsett
Voice and Vision: Bringing Your Writing to Life	6	Kathryn Heyman
Pitching, Agents & Business of Publishing	25	Alex Adsett
Business Skills & Marketing Prowess for Authors	7	Aleesah Darlison
Next Level Poetry	21	Melinda Smith

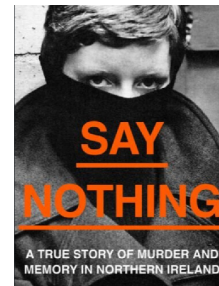
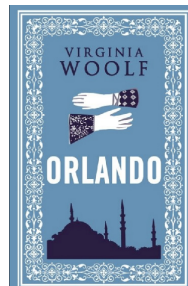
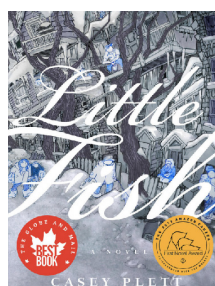
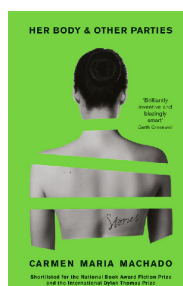
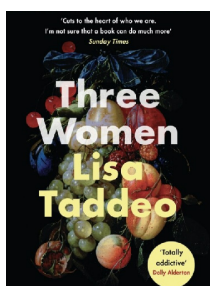
BETWEEN THE (ON) LINES

After previous years of success Between the Lines, our facilitated reading program in partnership with the University of Canberra was back in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the decision was made to rename the program to Between the (on) lines and host it online as participants were unable to meet in person.

Professors Jen Webb, Jordan Williams and Patrick Mullins generally lead and engaged participants through bi-monthly conversations built upon a curated reading list. Between the Lines is designed to be a program that focuses on the technical appreciation of writing, looking at authorial decisions rather than subjective appraisal, and remains one of the Centre's most beloved programs. To ensure that ACTW met COVID-19 restrictions we shifted Between the Lines from a bi-monthly program from Feb – Dec to a 6 month program from Jul – Dec. Despite the shift in delivery we had 13 participants across our fiction and nonfiction streams.



READING LIST 2020



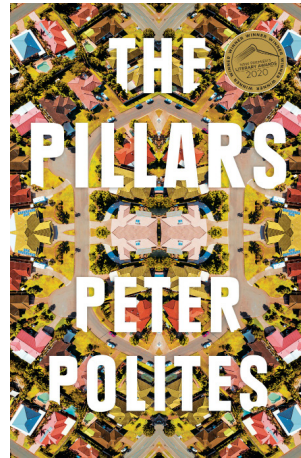
FACILITATORS 2020

Jordan Williams (fiction) - Jordan is an academic, writer and researcher at the University of Canberra. She has published short stories, prose poetry and multimedia works. She teaches writing and literature and does applied research, teaching creative writing to injured and ill service personnel.

Patrick Mullins (nonfiction) - Patrick Mullins is a Canberra-based writer and academic who holds a PhD from the University of Canberra. He is a former research fellow at the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research and the Museum of Australian Democracy and the 2015 winner of the Scribe non-fiction prize for young writers. His first book, *Tiberius with a Telephone*, was published by Scribe in 2018 and longlisted for a Walkley Book Award 2019. His second book, *The Trials of Portnoy*, was published by Scribe and was awarded the 2020 NSW Premier's Literary Award.



UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA



The ACT Writers Centre and UNSW Canberra were delighted to welcome Peter Polites as our 2020 ACT Writer-in-Residence. Mr Polites is a writer of Greek descent from Western Sydney who has written and performed pieces all over Australia. His novels include *The Pillars* and *Down the Hume*.

Polites applied with a plan to spend his time in Canberra working on a new novel, as well as delivering a public lecture. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the residency was postponed until March 2021.

Launched in 2017, the ACT Writer-in-Residence program provides writers with access to UNSW Canberra facilities. Each writer is encouraged to engage with students and researchers on campus, and reach out to the broader community through ACT Writers.

ACT Writers was successful in securing support from the Copyright Agency to continue the ACT Writer-in-Residence in partnership with UNSW in 2020.



COPYRIGHT AGENCY

AINSLIE+
GORMAN
ARTS CENTRES



In 2020 ACT Writers took a stand and harnessed our voice as the peak advocacy body for writers. Following adverse reactions from a range of quarters to the Canberra Writers Festival program and its lack of diversity, we issued a statement voicing our concerns and showing support for our community. This statement prompted us in turn to confront areas where our own organisation could do better in matters of diversity and inclusivity. The change of pace necessitated by COVID-19 gave us space to address these issues in a considered way. We have since taken steps to develop a code of conduct for all aspects of the organisation, to ensure ACTW will always be a safe and inclusive space. We are committed to growing and evolving as an organisation, to ensure we are an informed and thoughtful advocate for all of our community.

An open letter concerning the Canberra Writers Festival

As the peak body for ACT writers and their work, and an active member of the network of Australian writers centres, the ACT Writers Centre stands shoulder to shoulder with those expressing dismay at the continued lack of diversity in the Canberra Writers Festival's programming. We love Canberra's writing community and we want to promote all opportunities for writers in our region. However, we are more than just promoters – we are advocates. For all our community – including the culturally diverse writers in our region.

The Canberra Writers Festival (CWF) is a separate organisation to the ACT Writers Centre. They did not consult with us on programming, and we did not see the program before its public release. We have repeatedly tried to engage with the CWF in past years, including the festival's first in 2016. We have at times provided the Festival organising team with lists of wonderful and diverse writers in our region. Many other members of the community have also responded directly, in the media and online.

We acknowledge that COVID-19 continues to make the programming and delivery of events extremely challenging. However, the issue of true representation is the civic and professional responsibility of all arts organisations. We have a duty to create safe and inclusive spaces for our communities, our presenters and our audiences.

Australia is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Writers festivals – indeed the writing infrastructure as a whole – must recognise, reflect and support that diversity. The time for excuses has passed. For matters to improve, we must all do better. Canberra is a truly multicultural city. Our city's writing festival should represent that fact.

Make no mistake; we would love to work with the CWF to resolve these issues. We would be delighted to share our networks and help the Festival find ways to support all writers, including those in marginalised communities.

As it currently stands, we cannot support or promote this year's festival.

We would like to thank the members of Australia's literary community, especially the writers of colour and allies, who have sought to highlight these issues and demand better from our industry. We have already pledged to do better and are making significant structural changes to ensure we truly serve all communities. We are open to criticism and we will do better.

We will be directing our channels to promote and uplift writers from all backgrounds, and hope that you, our community, join us in embracing the amazing work our culturally diverse writers have to offer.

We are so much better together than apart, and have reached out to the CWF directly to offer our assistance addressing these issues moving forward.

“We applaud our colleagues at ACT Writers on their advocacy to create a safer and more inclusive festival. We couldn’t agree more” - Writers SA

“Good on ACT Writers for calling how you see it. Makes me proud to be a member” - Lisa Fuller

“If you want to support ACT Writers, read this open letter from ACT Writers” - Mick Cook

“Well done to ACT Writers in their advocacy, and willingness to work collaboratively on this issue” - Capital Yarns

*“We’re all in this. Great call ACT Writers”
- The Street Theatre*

**ACT Writers advocates for, connects,
develops and celebrates writers.
We are adaptive, inclusive and resilient.**

ACT Writers are unlimited.

“I attended my first online course with ACT Writers and Alex Adsett this morning. It went so smoothly we might as well have been in the same room” - Shelly Burr

*“Strong advocacy for the diverse world of writers. Well done ACT Writers”
- Rob Donnelly*

*“I applaud ACT Writers for calling the lack of diversity in the festival program out”
- Zoya Patel*

*“A big thanks to ACT Writers for programming the original one-day workshop then adapting to bring it online”
- Deborah Fleming*

“We’re fully in support of ACT Writers and their open letter. We’re proud to be part of National Writers Centre Network that is pushing for diversity and representation in the writing community, and greater recognition of the ways in which we need to change and improve” - Writers Vic

ACT Writers (ACTW) strives to create a safe space for all members of its community. By accepting a position at ACTW, I agree to abide by ACTW's Code of Conduct.

I will:

- help to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for everybody.
- ensure everybody has time to speak and the opportunity to actively engage in all activities.
- ensure the ACTW community is a harassment-free zone.
- I will not directly photograph or record anyone without first obtaining their express permission

I understand:

- by accepting a position as ACTW Staff, I am accepting a position of power. I will not use this power to request favours, personal benefit or to disempower others.
- no unsafe, aggressive, racist, homophobic, ableist, transphobic, ageist, sexist, fatphobic, classist or discriminatory actions or language of any kind will be tolerated.
- I will ensure that my behaviour is never discriminatory, harassing or bullying, and report any behaviour that I believe to be discriminatory, harassing or bullying.
- no unsafe, aggressive, sexual or inappropriate physical behaviour of any kind will be tolerated.
- I will act impartially and without prejudice and declare any potential or actual conflict of interest. I will not accept gifts or benefits that would influence my decisions.
- I will respect and keep confidential internal matters of the organisation and respect the privacy of others.
- I recognise the physical, financial, technological resources and intellectual property resources that belong to ACT Writers Centre Inc. I will use all work resources efficiently and only for appropriate purposes.
- I will report any behaviour by personnel that I believe is unethical, including:
 - I. behaviour that is contrary to these procedures
 - II. behaviour that violates any law, or is corrupt conduct or misconduct
 - III. mismanagement of resources or fraudulent behaviour
 - IV. behaviour that creates a danger to public health, safety or the environment.
- Alcohol and drug use
 - I. ACTW follows the responsible consumption of alcohol guidelines outlined by the Australian Government. It is required that staff and board will not exceed the legal limit of alcohol consumption when representing ACT Writers Centre Inc. This includes any and all events presented by ACT Writers internal and external, local arts events and launches where a staff/board member is representing the ACTW and while performing duties and ACT Writers time.

II. It is strictly prohibited for staff and board to be under the influence of any illicit substance. The manufacture, possession, distribution, sale, purchase or consumption of any illicit substance during work hours, on ACT Writer Centre Inc property or at any ACT Writers Centre Inc related event is strictly prohibited this code of conduct applies to activities relating to every aspect of the ACTW program, including online and platforms social media affiliated with ACTW.

- if I do not abide by this code, my position may be terminated in accordance with the ACTW Constitution and/or Fair Work Guidelines.

I must contact the Director as soon as possible to*:

- report any conflicts of interest and withdraw from my position if necessary.
- report any behaviour I see that conflicts with the Code of Conduct
- raise any questions or concerns regarding the Code of Conduct.

* All concerns are to be raised at first instance with the director unless another point of contact would be more appropriate in which you will contact that Chair.



The year 2020 was one of distinct change and disruption. The COVID-19 global pandemic rocked all sectors, including the Australian arts. Over its 25-year history, ACT Writers has experienced financial turbulence and instability. Going into 2020 with strong and strategic fiscal management was paramount to operational success. Through scrupulous financial management; significant reduction in overheads; leveraging available government stimulus and support, which included generous assistance from artsACT, ACTW finished the 2020 financial year in an improved, stable and strong financial position.

SUMMARY

In 2020, ACTW reported an operating surplus of \$113,168, which contrasts with the \$233 deficit position in 2019.

The total ACTW income increased from \$351,605 in 2019 to \$407,290 in 2020. ACTW's total expenditure decreased from \$351,838 to \$294,122. ACTW received \$16,682.25 in membership fees, \$22,645.92 in program participation and \$2,240.81 in donations.

ACTW retained earnings sit at \$118,418 – an increase from \$5,250 in 2019. During 2020 ACTW employed five part-time staff across four days per week. The priority for the team was to increase accessibility and inclusivity, and seamlessly adapt to operating as a digital organisation. This included adapting all programs to ensure we were operating in accordance with COVID-safe measures.

Some of the biggest changes the team made in 2020 include:

- A brand-new website (Squarespace), which integrates our membership management and e-news campaigns. The change in platform resulted in a saving of over \$4k.
- Introduction of a new bookkeeper, bringing a fresh set of eyes to our financial operations to ensure we are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- In the space of a month we were able to redesign our annual program be suitable for digital delivery.
- Ensuring ACTW will always be a safe space for everyone by creating a code of conduct, which has been edited and approved by Arts Law.

Additionally, we

- Increased financial subcommittee meetings to occur monthly, in order to review the 2020 budget.
- Leveraged additional income from the ATO cashflow boost scheme.
- Utilised Job Keeper most effectively to create a job-share for the Communications and Marketing managers, providing much-needed extra resourcing in these roles.

In 2020 ACTW were able to take a close look at all operating costs. With the reduction of many overhead costs, ACTW can look to the future to diversify and increase income through partnerships and continue to offer enticing member benefits and essential programs to the ACT region's writing and publishing sector.

Our continued areas of focus are:

1. Maintaining a digital component to our program, thereby ensuring our offerings are as accessible and inclusive as possible.
2. Providing clearer member benefits, including engaging with emerging writers, uplifting diverse voices, and conducting ongoing engagement to understand our members' needs
3. Providing high quality professional development opportunities which offer unique advantages to ACT region writers and incorporate the most experienced, relevant industry voices
4. Partnering and collaborating with a variety of different organisations and continuing to seek philanthropic development funding.

