



ACT WRITERS

**2021
ANNUAL
REPORT**

Annual Report 2021

ACT Writers Centre Inc.

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ACT Writers

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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, and The Street Theatre.

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. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Annual Report design and layout: Katy Mutton

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As the ACT region weathered the impact of COVID-19 in 2020, we emerged in 2021 excited to seize new opportunities and pursue growth. As it became evident the challenges raised by the pandemic would be ongoing and far-reaching, ACT Writers (ACTW) took stock of core priorities and areas where operations could be rationalised. In 2021, ACTW officially became a fully digital organisation, without a physical headquarters. In its virtual iteration ACTW is dedicated to being more available to writers than ever before. Having risen admirably to the requirements of remote working in the pandemic's first year, the ACT Writers team honed new ways to operate beyond the conventional four walls of an office, and we haven't looked back.

This organisational shift followed the highly successful delivery of digital offerings to our audiences, considered planning around delivery of future programs, and communication with peers and partners in the ACT arts community. Our digital iteration has enabled us to cement clear and practical hours of availability and deliver services structured to directly meet the needs of writers at all stages, ensuring that we are accessible to all members of our community. ACTW are incredibly grateful for the continued support and collaboration of our funders and partners, especially during COVID-19. ACT Writers would like to thank artsACT, the Copyright Agency, Harry Hartog ANU, the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the University of Canberra, the Australian National University and Art Monthly Australasia. We are also grateful for the support of The Street Theatre, ArtSound FM and Libraries ACT.

2021 saw the introduction of new initiatives for ACTW including Access All Areas – a monthly interactive online series demystifying the Australian publishing industry. We introduced two new website fixtures Focus On – a section spotlighting local writers in the ACT region and highlighting staff monthly reading choices, plus 30 Seconds With – a series of short profiles showcasing authors with a connection to the ACT Writers and our programs.

Ahead of the ACT going into lockdown again in August 2021, the second wave of COVID-19 meant ACT Writers had foreseen and planned for renewed program limitations. Some interstate presenters contacted us to cancel or postpone their events, while we shifted other workshops into a digital format. While ACTW was prepared with a strategy for handling the lockdown from an operational perspective, we did start seeing the strain of lockdown impact on our membership retention, while workshop bookings receded, in some cases requiring outright cancellation.

Conscious of the toll lockdown took both financially and emotionally on our community, ACTW knew it was our duty to try and uplift and support our community in whatever capacity we could. We understood that a huge amount of authors were suffering on multiple fronts, with book launches, promotional events and workshops being cancelled. Infused with humour, practicality and defiance, ACTW devised a free online event called F*CK COVID. This Zoom event involved an afternoon of two panel discussions featuring four of Australia's most exciting literary voices: Mark Brandi, Shu-Ling Chua, Irma Gold, and Sneha Lee. The purpose of the event was to bring the community together to celebrate and talk writing while also providing a promotional platform and source of income for our paid panellists. While the event was free, we asked members with capacity to make a donation directly toward author fees. We were blown away by the support and generosity of our members, who contributed over \$800 in donations. This event demonstrated our critical role advocating for, supporting and celebrating ACT region writers, and the willingness of our members and community to do the same.

The ACTW team once again demonstrated its commitment to the ACT region writing community in 2021. It is due to their immense talent, drive, passion and work ethic that we have been able to offer the incredible programs, initiatives and support we did in 2021. 2021 also saw some staff changes at ACTW. Outgoing Operations Manager Jerzy Beaumont relocated to Canada in July 2021 for an exciting new chapter, and he will be sincerely missed. We welcomed incoming operations manager Miriam Wicks-Wilson in July and are so grateful to have her understanding and passion for the landscape of Australian literature. I am personally grateful and humbled to work with a team of incredibly talented arts workers, and my deepest thanks go to Jerzy Beaumont, Claire Delahunty, Nigel Featherstone, Katy Mutton and Miriam Wicks-Wilson.

A huge note of thanks must also go to our Board for their ongoing support, guidance, dedication, respect, and trust in the team. We are also grateful to our committed members who continued to support us during the unprecedented time of 2021. We cannot wait to continue supporting, advocating for, collaborating with, developing and celebrating the incredible ACT region writing community.

Meg Wilson

CEO
ACT Writers



MEG WILSON CEO (she/they)

Meg holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Canberra where she majored in creative writing and advertising. They are currently undertaking a Diploma of Leadership and Management through YWCA. 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.

MIRIAM WICKS-WILSON Operations Manager (she/her)

Miriam Wicks-Wilson is the ACT Writers Operations Manager. Miriam's role at ACT Writers includes coordinating memberships and facilitating our workshops & events. She also operates as the main point of contact for many of our member interactions. She was previously ACT Writers Admin and Programming Officer.

Miriam holds a Bachelor of Arts (French Language and Culture, and Gender, Sexuality and Culture) from the Australian National University. She is excited to continue using her skills to support Canberra writers and uplift marginalised voices.

CLAIRE DELAHUNTY Communications Manager (she/her)

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 and editor of *What We Carry: Poetry on childbearing*, published in 2021 by Recent Work Press.

NIGEL FEATHERSTONE Creative Producer (he/him)

Nigel is an author and literary arts worker. 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 delivers three programs: *Between the Lines*, *Access All Areas* and the *ACT Writer-in-Residence Program*; he continues to assist the **HARDCOPY** community and other developing writers who are committed to their work.

Nigel's novel *Bodies of Men* was published by Hachette Australia in 2019 and was longlisted for the 2020 ARA Historical Novel Prize, shortlisted for the 2020 ACT Book of the Year, and shortlisted in the 2019 Queensland Literary Awards. In 2021, Ultimo Press, an imprint of Hardie Grant, will publish Nigel's third novel, titled *My Heart is a Little Wild Thing*. Nigel's short stories have been published in Australian literary journals including the *Review of Australian Fiction*, *Meanjin* and *Island*. His creative non-fiction is widely published, appearing in the *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Canberra Times* and *The Millions*, among other outlets. He has received four Canberra Critics Circle Awards and been awarded residencies at Varuna and Bundanon. In 2013 he was a Creative Fellow at UNSW Canberra. In 2020, along with novelists Julie Keys and Robyn Cadwallader, he was awarded the inaugural Write North Residency, an initiative of the Byron Writers Festival. Nigel is represented by Gaby Naher of Left Bank Literary Sydney.

KATY MUTTON Design Manager (she/her)

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 a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Design from the University of Canberra and a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Australian National University School of Art and Design. Katy 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), the Michael Hobbs OAM People's Choice Award (2020), and the Rosalie Gascoigne Memorial Award from the Capital Arts Patrons Organisation (2018).

ANGELA PURCELL Accounts (she/her)

Angela Purcell is a passionate BAS agent and Bookkeeper who specialises in helping individuals, small business and Not-for-Profits sectors keep their accounts in order and remain compliant, so that they can concentrate on what they do best. Angela helps many different types of industries, including the Arts. Having served on several not-for-profit boards herself, Angela has a great understanding of the necessities involved in the management of Boards and Committees and strives to make her role as BAS agent/Bookkeeper and easy relationship where clients can feel that she has their backs'. Coming on board to ACT Writers mid-2020, Angela brings a personalised service.

Angela has been an award-winning hairdresser and retail manager, as well as working in office management, however, as a self-confessed numbers nerd, Angela plans to continue helping others in their account management.

OUTGOING STAFF MEMBERS

JERZY BEAUMONT Operations (resigned July 2021)



In 2021 the staff and board of ACT Writers have continued to build on the values-led strategic planning developed in 2020.

We now operate as a digital organisation, a move that has allowed us to be more adaptive and responsive in what has proved to be another turbulent year. ACT Writers staff have had greater capacity to serve our community and have been able to successfully deliver a wide range of programs while continuing to ensure that our operations and finances are transparent and robust.

The development of our new Business Plan is set to be finalised in the coming months. This ambitious plan gives shape to the next five years of the organisation while looking to ensure a vibrant future for the next 25. Part of this plan is to review our program offerings with a focus on professional and craft development; to increase and diversify our income streams with a focus on growing a healthy operating surplus; and to continue our advocacy work to ensure that writers and their interests are being represented, especially in relation to the ACT Government's Statement of Ambition for the Arts.

Last year, we made a commitment to serve writers from all backgrounds. This commitment has continued to inform our work in 2021 with our staff, board, members and community modelling our values of creative development; diversity, accessibility and inclusion; integrity; and sustainability. We are pleased to report that over 44% of presenters engaged in 2021 are from marginalised communities. Our target of 50% remains in place for 2022.

Writing can be a solitary practice and after an extended period of mostly digital connection we look forward to spending time in person with our community at this year's Notable Book Awards. This new format of award will recognise and uplift the incredible work of our region's writers over the past two years and allow us to form new partnerships to deliver an exceptional event while celebrating with you all.

ACT Writers is fortunate to employ such a knowledgeable, talented and ambitious team. We are grateful to Miriam Wicks-Wilson, Claire Delahunty, Katy Mutton, Nigel Featherstone and outgoing Operations Manager Jerzy Beaumont for their hard work and commitment. We also extend special thanks to our CEO Meg Wilson who has expertly led this team through a period of external uncertainty and internal change to ensure a safe, inclusive work environment where staff are supported to deliver on the organisation's mission and vision.

We have also been blessed with an incomparable board; Alex Sloane, Chris Huet, Jacqueline de Rose-Ahern, Thao Le, Katarina Pearson, Ann Poole and Deb Stevens have shared their experience and expertise to guide the organisation through another difficult year. In early 2022 we sadly bid farewell to outgoing Chair Sophie Mannix. A heartfelt thank you to Sophie for the many years of dedicated support and guidance she has given ACT Writers, first as an intern then a staff member, a board member and then as Chair. We wish Sophie well in her next steps.

ACT Writers would also like to offer our sincere thanks for the support of our funders and partners. We are incredibly grateful for our ongoing relationship with artsACT and would also like to thank the Copyright Agency for their support of the ACT Writer-in-Residence program and the University of New South Wales for being our program partner. In 2021 we established exciting new partnerships with Arts Monthly Australasia and Art Sound FM while building upon our important collaborations with Harry Hartog ANU, the University of Canberra, and the Australian National University, The Street Theatre and Libraries ACT.

It is a privilege to serve our community. Canberra and its surrounding region continues to produce a wealth of unique and diverse talent, something we plan to support, develop and promote for decades to come.

Emma Batchelor

Interim Chair

ACT Writers



ACTW BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

EMMA BATCHELOR - Interim Chair (she/her)

Emma Batchelor is a writer and author from Canberra with extensive experience in financial management, community engagement and operations. In May, 2021 her first novel 'Now that I see you' won the Australian/Vogel Literary Award. From 2016-2019 she edited and wrote for online publication Leiden, and in 2017 published 'Building a Conscious Wardrobe (and other fun things)' a book championing conscious consumerism. Emma holds a Bachelor of Medical Science (Hons) from the Australian National University and has a professional background in corporate responsibility.

ALEX SLOAN - Deputy Chair (she/her)

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.

CHRIS HUET - Secretary (he/him)

Chris Huet is a communications coach, working through his company Understood to help people become better communicators. He served twenty years in the Air Force as a fighter instructor, leader and project manager. After leaving the Air Force, Chris worked as a consultant and business development manager for Defence, other government agencies and private companies. Chris is also a spoken word poet, performing as CJ Bowerbird on stages across Australia and around the world. He is the 2012 Australian Poetry Slam Champion and a two-time TEDx speaker. Chris has extensive experience working with not-for-profit boards and committees, particularly in partnership and sponsorship management.

JACQUELINE DE ROSE-AHERN (she/her)

Jacqueline regularly contributes to a variety of online platforms and has appeared at many literary events. She is the founder of the Story Creators Community, assisting aspiring creatives, and has been a mentor to adults and children alike, encouraging them to pursue their creative goals. She holds a Masters in International Development and works in international affairs. Through her writing, Jacqueline endeavours to encourage her readers to learn more about the world, supporting an empathetic and inclusive community.

THAO LE (she/her)

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

KATARINA PEARSON (she/her)

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 Belgrade in the 1930's, she has been an active member of the Canberra literary community since her arrival to the Capital in the early 90's.

Having helped develop and subsequently owned Electric Shadows Bookshop over a period of twenty-five 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 Harry Hartog Bookshop at the Australian National University.

ANN POOLE (she/her)

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 (she/her)

As an isolated rural child doing correspondence school, reading was an entree into the world for Deb. A part time job with the former Mary Martin's chain seduced her into the book trade. Work in various book shops including owning one lead lead to work as an independent sales agent representing Allen & Unwin and other publishers in the ACT and SE NSW. Over the 18 years working with publishers, booksellers, authors and readers she developed a deep passion for Australian writing and publishing. Her primary focus being support of local writers and encouraging connection between them booksellers and readers.

ACT WRITERS PATRON**MARION HALLIGAN AM**

Marion Halligan was born in Newcastle NSW, by the sea, and has lived most of her adult life in Canberra, with periods in Paris. She has written twenty-three books, including six works of nonfiction and five short story collections, and one play. She believes fiction illuminates our lives, and for this reason she loves to read it as well as write it. One of Australia's most important writers, she was appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2006 for services to literature and for her work in promoting Australian writing.

OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

SOPHIE MANNIX Chair (resigned 2022)

ZOYA PATEL (resigned 2021)

IN NUMBERS

Membership

We saw a rise in membership by 26% with membership fees generating \$21k of our 2021 income.

We saw a rise of more-than 25% increase in workshop participation from 2020

Instagram followers

1.4k – we saw over 10% growth in our Instagram followers over 2021.

Instagram engagement

ACT Writers saw a 21% increase in Instagram engagement during 2021





The Anne Edgeworth Emerging Writer's Fellowship

The Anne Edgeworth Emerging Writer's Fellowship is provided to an emerging writer in the Canberra 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 Anne Edgeworth fellowship for 2021 was awarded to **Elizabeth Walton** and **Hanne M Watkins**.

The 2021 Fellowship was awarded \$6,000 to be split between two recipients. This decision was made as both Elizabeth and Hanne's applications were of such a high calibre. The Fellowship is provided annually by the Anne Edgeworth Trust and administered by ACT Writers.

The June Shenfield National Poetry Awards

First Place Keith Scott (ACT) for *Streets of Paris*

"An intriguing beginning with 'You are the streets of Paris, love'. The poem is strongly located in place, and the poet keeps the metaphor and the narrative flowing freely throughout. Declarative as to the relationship but avoids mawkish sentimentality. Imagery is evocative and unforced, conjuring both the beloved and the streets and river of the city. A lovely encompassing final few lines, an all-out paean to artist and muse, strongly finished."

- Judges comments

Second Place Helen Patrice (VIC) for *Re-reading Sylvia's 'Tulips'*

Third Place Peter Heavenheld (ACT) for *Concerto for Auctioneer's Mallet in G Major*

Category judged by Sandra Renew

Marjorie Graber-McInnis Short Story Award

Award Winner Camella Macpherson for *Embers*

"Against the threat of bushfire and ominous orange skies, Embers explores the pull of familial ties, and traces the ways in which memory and grief bind us and pull us apart. Relationships are cleverly conveyed through small gestures and straight-forward dialogue, elucidating the shorthand ways that members of a family communicate. Judgements are laid bare, and while the world close by burns, and the threat of fresh loss looms, old patterns are reinforced. Through clean prose, tender acceptances show nuanced and deep connections, revealing a family pulled apart by loss but ultimately bound."

- Judges comments

Shortlisted Gail Reekie (ACT) for *Coal Dust ad Orange Blossom*

Category judged by Melissa Catherine Manning

Postponement of the Awards

ACT Writers regrettably had to postpone its 2021 ACT Publishing Awards, due to the extended Canberra lockdown. The awards reopened in 2022 under a new structure. The purpose of the ACT Publishing awards is to acknowledging the resilience and achievements of our writers. Doing this through a robust awards process and prominent platform is our biggest priority. We believe that the best way to approach this is with a strategic change the structure of our 2021 awards (which will accept entries of books published in the prior year), adapting to acknowledge the difficulty posed by recent conditions.



PUBLIC EVENTS

After another year of challenges across the Arts Sector, relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was wonderful when our team was able to take get out and about in person. In November ACTW CEO Meg Wilson and Operations Manager Miriam Wicks-Wilson attended the 31st annual Canberra Critics Circle Awards. We were particularly delighted to celebrate with five talented members of our literary community who were receiving awards for their work.

Held at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the annual awards celebrate originality, excellence, energy and creativity in our region. The 2021 awards for literature were given as follows:

Lucy Neave for *Believe in Me* UQ Press, August 2021

- a complex and wise novel in which a young woman pieces together her mother's life story, hoping to understand her better and come to terms with her own history and identity.

Irma Gold for the novel *The Breaking*, (Midnight Sun, March 2021) a confronting story of the link between animal tourism and cruelty in the elephant camps of Thailand, seen through the eyes of two young women.

Merlinda Bobis for *The Kindness of Birds* Spinifex, May 2021

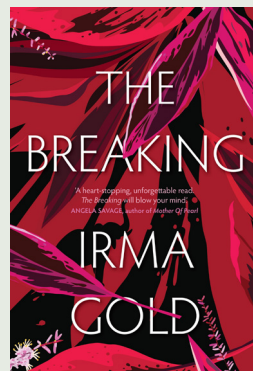
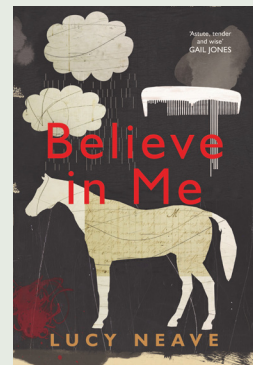
- a poignant collection of linked stories that travel between Canberra and The Philippines to pay homage to kindness amidst grief, discord and displacement, using the metaphor of birds.

Sarah Rice for *Text/ure* Recent Work Press, 2021

- a full colour book, a feast for eye and ear alike, that follows the author-artist as she commissioned original music from six Canberra-connected composers based on her poem, "If I Could Have Given You A Note," which were later performed by the Oriana Chorale, backed by her own projected artworks.

Dylan Van Den Berg received the prestigious Helen Tsongas Award in recognition of his acting and writing work. The Canberra Critics Circle cited a remarkable year of acting and writing, especially in his play *Milk*, presented at The Street Theatre in June.

We are so proud to have our members and friends recognised for their incredible work.





L-R - Kellie-Anne Moore, Meg Wilson and Sarah Mason

She Leads Conference

In June ACTW CEO Meg Wilson was reunited with two former ACTW CEOs, Sarah Mason and Kellie-Anne Moore at the YWCA She Leads Conference. Both Meg and Sarah were She Leads scholarship recipients and Kellie-Anne was working with the YWCA.

March 4 Justice

On March 15 2021 ACTW CEO Meg Wilson and Design Manager Katy Mutton attended the Canberra March for Justice at Parliament House. ACTW was proud to attend such a powerful day, shared with extraordinary women, nonbinary people and allies.



Above - Biff Ward delivering her speech at March 4 Justice

Long-time ACTW member Biff Ward – an inspiring writer and advocate for Women’s Rights – gave an incredibly moving speech.

As a writing organisation and advocacy body, ACTW believes that silence on important issues such as these is simply not an option, and that is our duty to stand with survivors and demand change.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH



L-R - Pictures from the March 4 Justice rally at Parliament House. ACTW Design Manager Katy Mutton and CEO Meg Wilson



CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

ACTW started 2021 with two in-person workshops scheduled (Isobelle Carmody and Sulari Gentill) but as the COVID-19 situation evolved, we understood our members were concerned about attending physical events. In response, we adapted and reduced our creative workshop series to allow for multiple digital events. Our facilitators for this adapted digital program included Isobelle Carmody, Sulari Gentill, Gemma Carey, Lisa Fuller, Tania McCartney, Nicole Godwin and Julia Carlomagno. Despite having to run a significantly smaller number of workshops in 2021, we are pleased to say that they contributed \$26,060.87 worth of revenue to ACTW and provided paid professional opportunities to seven writers.

ACT Writers' first in-person workshop for over a year was held on Saturday 22 May at Harry Hartog Booksellers ANU, hosted by Isobelle Carmody. Isobelle guided 13 focused participants through a nuanced exploration of writing heroes and villains, and provided a liberal sprinkling of writerly wisdom throughout the day.

MASTERCLASSES

Our Masterclass initiative consisted of 2 multi-session programs, each delivered over a 3-month period. These Masterclasses offered the opportunity for writers to develop their skills with ongoing access to a master in the field. Each Masterclass provides the opportunity for writers to receive feedback on set writing activities completed between sessions. These are digital programs designed for the convenience and ease-of-accessibility for participants. The ACT Masterclass facilitators for 2021 were Nadine Davidoff and Melinda Smith.

Nadine Davidoff has worked as a Senior Editor at Random House Australia and as a Commissioning Editor at Black Inc. She was also fiction editor for *The Monthly* magazine before starting her own freelance editing business in 2006. Nadine is an honorary fellow at the Writing Centre for Scholars and Researchers at Melbourne University's School of Graduate Research.

Melinda Smith is a poet, editor, teacher, arts advocate and event curator based in Canberra. She is the author of seven poetry collections, including the 2014 Prime Minister's Literary Award-winner *Drag down to unlock or place an emergency call*. She frequently collaborates with artists in other disciplines including dancers, musicians and visual artists, and is also a former poetry editor of *The Canberra Times*.

APPRAISE



The APPRAISE collaborative mentorship program provided two emerging writers with the unique opportunity to develop their arts writing skills and build collaborative industry connections through Australasia's premier, ANU-based art magazine, Art Monthly Australasia, with key professional support from ACTW.

Congratulations to Amy Walters and Zeta Xu who received the inaugural 2021 APPRAISE collaborative mentorship. ACT Writers members may already be familiar with Amy Walters' work through her previous contributions to ACT Writers' New Territory program.

We thank artsACT for supporting this partnership with Art Monthly Australasia and congratulate both award recipients. We are delighted with the outcome and the quality of arts criticism generated through this unique partnership.

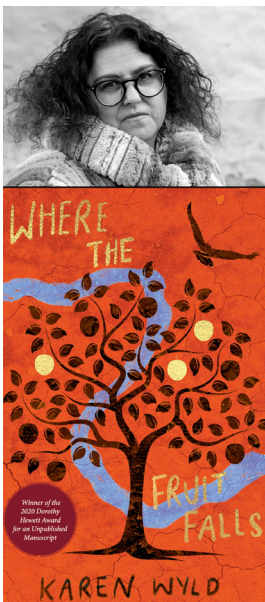


Amy Walters



Zeta Xu

30 SECONDS WITH ...



30 seconds with
KAREN WYLD

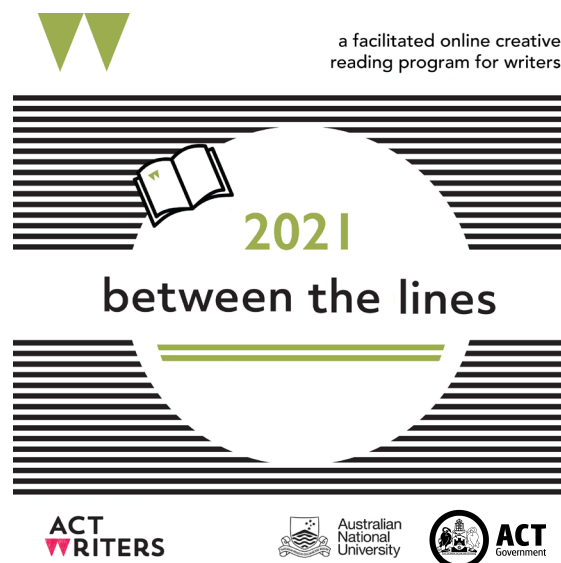
This series of brief, engaging profiles of writers with a connection to the impact and services of ACT Writers simultaneously illustrated the reach and benefits of our programs while highlighting authors and their current works and projects. This initiative has proved a popular source of conversation-generating content across our social media platforms.

In 2021 we profiled:

Shu Ling-Chua
Lisa Fuller
Tania McCartney
Karen Wyld

BETWEEN THE LINES

After previous years of success Between the Lines, our facilitated reading program in partnership with the University of Canberra was back again 2021. Led by prominent authors, Lucy Neave, and Patrick Mullins generally led 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 ACT Writers most beloved creative programs.



READING LIST



FACILITATORS 2021

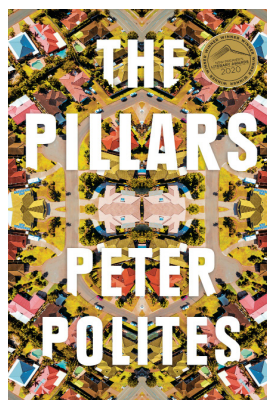
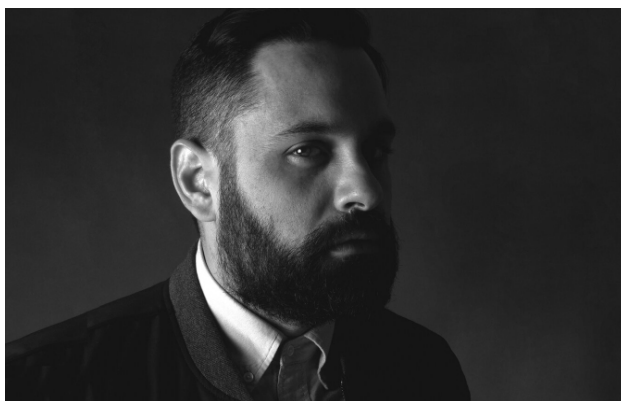
Lucy Neave (fiction)

Lucy Neave is the author of the novels *Believe in Me* (released September 2021) and *Who We Were* (shortlisted for the ACT Book of the Year), a Griffith Review prize-winning novella set in a horse hospital in Dubai, and short stories published in Australian and American literary journals. She has spent several years living in the United States: as a Fulbright scholar completing a Masters of Fine Arts in Writing; teaching English in universities; and in 2019 as a visiting scholar in the English Department at New York University. She currently teaches creative writing at the ANU in Canberra where she lives with her family.

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.

ACT WRITER - IN - RESIDENCE



ACTW delivered the 2020 ACT Writer-in-Residence program in 2021 due to COVID-19, in collaboration with UNSW Canberra. Selected writer Peter Polites was able to come to Canberra in March from Western Sydney where he resides. Polites came to the ACT to work on his new novel.

Peter 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*.

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.



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AINSLIE+
GORMAN
ARTS CENTRES



IN MEMORY, VALERIE PARV AM

On April 25 2021 the writing sector lost an immense talent when romance writer and much-admired Canberra story-teller, Valerie Parv, died suddenly. Valerie was a long-time member of ACT Writers. She has been a stalwart in our series of creative workshops; delivering romance and general fiction writing full-day sessions as a fixture of each year's program. These workshops have always been popular, and Valerie has time and again demonstrated that any preconceptions about the romance writing genre as 'lesser fiction' are ill-founded. Over the years, many of our workshop participants benefitted from Valerie's expertise, openness and generosity sharing writing and industry-related insights.

Valerie Parv was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2015 Queen's Birthday Honours List for significant contributions to the arts as a prolific author and as a role model and mentor. Valerie was one of Australia's most successful authors, having sold more than thirty-four million copies of her books.

On behalf of all of us at ACT Writers, and all those who came into contact with Valerie through our workshops, we'd like to thank her for her wisdom, her generous enthusiasm for quality writing, and her commitment and contribution to the world of writing not just in Canberra, but internationally. She will be greatly missed, but the pages of her books will continue to be turned with great joy.



ACCESS ALL AREAS

The ACT Writers 2021 flagship program was a new initiative called Access All Areas (AAA). AAA was designed to provide writers with invaluable and candid insights directly from the Australian publishing industry. It was designed to build capacity and offer privileged industry exposure to writers on their path to publication. This program was designed to provide direct access for ACT region writers to the Australian publishing professionals, an opportunity that is often missed to ACT geography. We deliberately chose a digital delivery for this program to breakdown geographical barriers and allow writers to connect directly with publishing industry professionals.

The industry experts involved in AAA were Grace Heifetz (Left Bank Literary), Meredith Curnow (Penguin Random House), Alex Adsett (Alex Adsett Literary), Natasha Solomon (The Rights Hive), Evelyn Araluen (Overland), Ian See (Text Publishing), Hazel Lam, Catherine Milne (Harper Collins), awarded poet Melinda Smith, Shalini Kunahlan (Hardie Grant Publishing), and Linda Bruce (Hachette Australia).

“Thanks so much to you and ACT Writers for facilitating and organising these sessions this year.”
- Maxine Fawcett

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**

MELINDA SMITH



LINDA BRUCE

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**



SHALINI KUNAHLAN

MARKETING & PUBLICITY

EVELYN ARALUEN



**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

18 MAR

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**



all about publishers
MEREDITH CURNOW

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**



WITH HAZEL LAM



18 FEB

GRACE HEIFETZ

all about literary agents

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**



IAN SEE

**ACCESS
ALL
AREAS
2021**

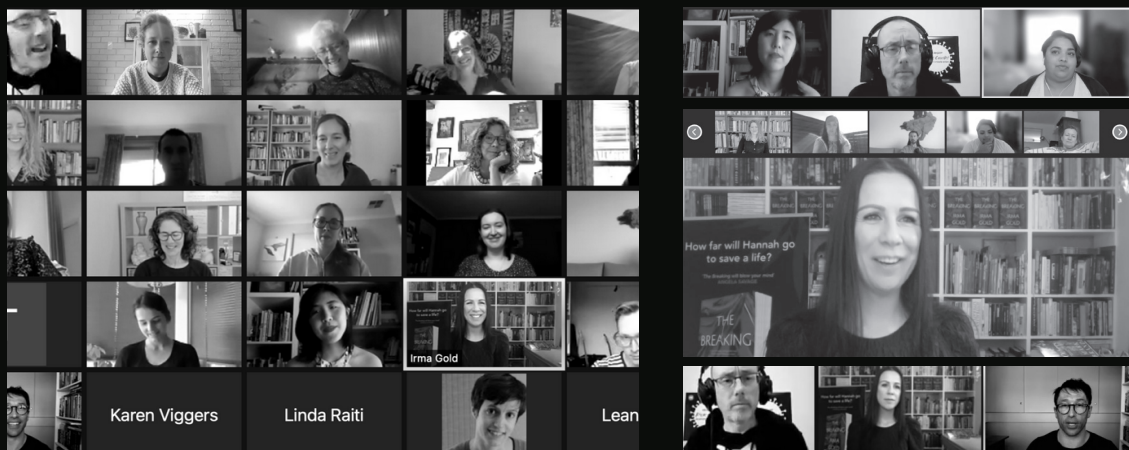
ALEX ADSETT





F*CK COVID was a special initiative of ACTW in response to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which caused the cancellation of many literary events. F*CK COVID was designed to support the writers and creatives impacted by the rolling COVID shut-downs. It was our way of showing solidarity, providing entertainment, conversation and providing writers with a platform and avenue of income.

F*CK COVID featured an intimate online panel discussion with four of Australia's most exciting literary voices, split into a fiction and nonfiction session, facilitated by ACT Writers' Nigel Featherstone. Presenters who took part in F*CK COVID were Mark Brandi, Irma Gold, Shu-Ling Chua and Sneha Lees.





28
AUG

"Insightful and touching"
- **Jasmeet Sahi**



28
AUG

"A relaxing bookish afternoon to brighten up a gloomy Sydney day. Great session, thank you!"
- **Dinuka Mckenzie**



28
AUG

*"#F*ckCovid what a great way to spend an afternoon!"*
- **Sarah Ross**



28
AUG

"Super inspiring talk about, among other things, writing a memoir that includes complicated family stories"
- **Jonathan Butler**

FOCUS ON

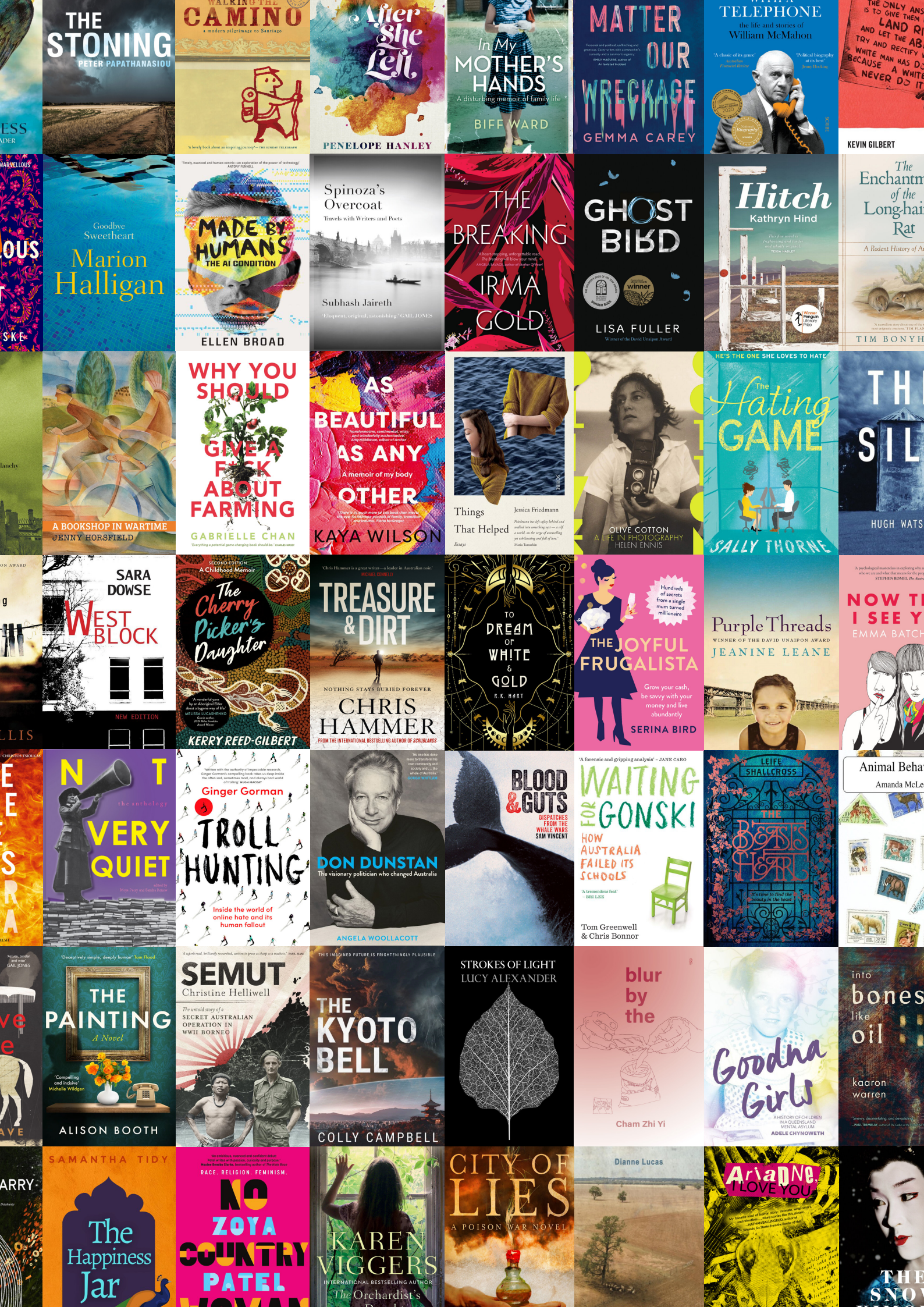
ACTW Focus On is an initiative that highlights ACT region writers and their work. Each month we highlight five works by ACT region authors through our website and across social media. The Focus On archive is maintained through our website and serves as a fantastic reference for anyone looking to hunt down writing by the authors of our region.

This initiative allows us to further understand the scope and size of our sector, and reiterate the immense forte that comes from our region. It also enables us to celebrate, diversity in writing across genres.

In addition to highlighting works specifically written by ACT region writers, we also share a monthly archive of what our staff are reading. Sharing our team reads enables us to feature local, national and international writers, across genres. It highlights the uniqueness of our individual reads and encourages us to keep reading. We encourage our audience to read widely and purchase reads through ACT region based bookstores wherever possible.

During 2021 ACT Writers proudly highlighted more than sixty ACT Region authors through our Focus On initiative, and shared over sixty staff reads which spanned local, national and international publications. In addition, we ran an additional Focus On devoted to Children's Books. If you're stuck on what to read next, ACTW Focus On is the ideal place to start.





THE STONING
PETER PAPANATHANASIOU

WALKING THE CAMINO
A modern pilgrimage to Santiago

After She Left
PENELOPE HANLEY

In My MOTHER'S HANDS
A disturbing memoir of family life
BIFF WARD

MATTER OUR WRECKAGE
GEMMA CAREY

TELEPHONE
the life and stories of William McMahon
"A classic of its genre"
"Political biography at its best"

THE ONLY ANSWER IS TO GIVE THEM LAND RIGHTS AND LET THE ABORIGINALS TRY AND RECTIFY IT. WHITE MAN HAS DONE THIS BECAUSE A WHITE MAN NEVER DO IT

Goodbye Sweetheart
Marion Halligan

MADE BY HUMANS
THE AI CONDITION
ELLEN BROAD

Spinoza's Overcoat
Travels with Writers and Poets
Subhash Jaireth
"Eloquent, original, astonishing"
GAIL JONES

THE BREAKING IRMA GOLD
A heart-breaking, unforgettable story of the beautiful and the poor
ANGELA SAVAGE, author of *Under the Skin*

GHOST BIRD
LISA FULLER
Winner of the David Unwin Award

Hitch
Kathryn Hind
"This has to be one of the best Australian novels of the year"
"A brilliant debut"
"A superbly written and moving novel"
TIM FLANNERY

The Enchantment of the Long-haired Rat
A Rodent History of Australia
TIM BONYHON

A BOOKSHOP IN WARTIME
JENNY HORSFIELD

WHY YOU SHOULD GIVE A F*CK ABOUT FARMING
GABRIELLE CHAN
"Everything a potential game-changing book should be"
"GEMMA STAR"

AS BEAUTIFUL AS ANY OTHER
A memoir of my body
KAYA WILSON
"This is a beautiful memoir of the body, the mind, and the soul of a young woman who has lived a life of privilege, but who is not immune to the struggles of everyday life"

Things That Helped
Jessica Friedman
"Friedman has left us behind and walked into something vast—a self-made world on the edge of something profound and beautiful"
"MIRA TALEN"

OLIVE COTTON
A LIFE IN PHOTOGRAPHY
HELEN ENNIS

The Hating Game
SALLY THORNE
"HE'S THE ONE SHE LOVES TO HATE"

THE SILVER
HUGH WATSON

WEST BLOCK
SARA DOWSE
NEW EDITION

The Cherry Picker's Daughter
KERRY REED-GILBERT
"A wonderful story by an Aboriginal Elder about a young girl who grows up in a remote town in the outback"
"MELISSA LUCASHEK"

TREASURE & DIRT
CHRIS HAMMER
NOTHING STAYS BURIED FOREVER
FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SCORLANDS*

TO DREAM OF WHITE & GOLD
R.K. HART

THE JOYFUL FRUGALISTA
SERINA BIRD
Hundreds of secrets from a single mum turned millionaire
Grow your cash, be savvy with your money and live abundantly

Purple Threads
WINNER OF THE DAVID UNWIN AWARD
JEANINE LEANE

NOW THAT I SEE YOU
EMMA BATCH

VERY QUIET
the anthology
"A fantastic collection of stories from some of the best young Australian writers"

TROLL HUNTING
Ginger Gorman
Inside the world of online hate and its human fallout

DON DUNSTAN
The visionary politician who changed Australia
ANGELA WOOLLACOTT

BLOOD & GUTS
DISPATCHES FROM THE WHOLE WORLD
SAM VINCENT

WAITING FOR GONSKI
HOW AUSTRALIA FAILED ITS SCHOOLS
Tom Greenwell & Chris Bonnor
"A forensic and gripping analysis"
"JANE CARO"

THE BEASTS HEAR
LEIFE SHALLCROSS
"It's time to find the beauty in the beast"

Animal Behaviour
Amanda McLeish

THE PAINTING
A Novel
ALISON BOOTH
"Decapitatively simple, deeply human"
"TOM FLOOD"

SEMUT
Christine Helliwell
The world story of a SECRET AUSTRALIAN OPERATION IN WWII BORNEO

THE KYOTO BELL
COLLY CAMPBELL
THIS IMAGINED FUTURE IS FRIGHTENINGLY PLAUSIBLE

STROKES OF LIGHT
LUCY ALEXANDER

blur by the
Cham Zhi Yi

Goodna Girls
ADELE CHYNOWETH
A HISTORY OF CHILDREN IN QUEENSLAND MENTAL ASYLUM

into bones like oil
kaaron warren
"Smokey, disorienting, and devastating"
"PAUL TREMBLAY, author of *The Colour of Paradise*"

The Happiness Jar
SAMANTHA TIDY

NO ZOA COUNTRY
PATEL
"An ambitious, nuanced and carefully researched work with passion, clarity and purpose"
"MELISSA LUCASHEK, bestselling author of *The Great Indoors*"
RACE. RELIGION. FEMINISM.

KAREN VIGGERS
INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR
The Orchardist's Daughter

CITY OF LIES
A POISON WAR NOVEL
Dianne Lucas

Aradne I LOVE YOU

THE SNOW

With considered fiscal management, combined with the support of government stimulus measures, ACTW were able to bolster financial reserves in 2020. This much-needed boost to financial stability created a stronger strategic position for ACT Writers in 2021, although a range of options and opportunities were certainly curbed by the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The combination of financial limitations experienced by our community and audience, border closures and digital saturation and fatigue meant ACT Writers was forced to cancel multiple events.

ACT Writers' largest expenditure is staff costs. Our dedicated team shoulders an immense workload across part-time hours with the total full time equivalent of 2.4 people. Throughout 2021 we have been restructuring roles and responsibilities to address legacy issues with a focus on increasing staff wellbeing and reducing the risk of burnout. Staffing resources are being reallocated to priorities directly related to income-generation for the organisation.

SUMMARY

- Reported operating deficit of \$ -17,457
- Total income decreased from \$407,290 to \$281,964 – note the income from 2020 included multiple government stimulus packages, which account for such a large difference in 2020 vs 2021 income.
- Total expenditure increased by 1.77% from 2020 to 2021
- ACTW received \$21,095.11 in membership, \$2,512.54 in donations and \$26,060.87 in program participation.
- ACTW retained earnings sit at \$100,961 – a decrease from \$118,418 in 2020.
- In 2021 ACTW employed 5 part time employees and 1 casual employee. The priority for 2021 was to continue the stabilisation of ACTW financial position, maintain our connection and access as a digital organisation and work towards the next chapter of ACTW.



Some of the most significant changes made in 2021 include:

- Transition to operations as a fully digital organisation
- Hiring of a new Operations Manager
- Staffing restructures to best maximise income-generating activities across our small team
- Established an annual membership drive, the inaugural year saw an increase in membership renewals by 80%. November received \$3177 in membership income compared to the monthly average of \$1758.

Our continued areas of focus are:

- Ensure we have at a minimum 45% of all paid professionals coming from a diverse or marginalised backgrounds
- Ensure all programs generate a minimum 25% profit
- Continue to make our programs as accessible as possible by creating digital offerings and providing semi-subsided places
- Seek partnership and sponsorship to diversify our income streams and in-kind support

Despite the continued close and conservative fiscal management employed in 2021, ACT Writers must still manage the challenge of limited financial and team resources. While our staff are remunerated at industry-award rates, our overheads have been rationalised as much as possible and we have stable reserves to cover the 2021 deficit, our financial position needs strengthening. There remains a significant risk that the funding of ACT Writers is currently insufficient to achieve our mission and purpose and is not conducive to long-term sustainability.

Our 2022 business plan, which is set to be released shortly, seeks to re-address these risks to ensure that ACT Writers can be a model

