



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

TOUGH WITH E AND THE WAR AT THE GRANNIES

Special school holiday event for children's comedian and now children's author **Charlie Brooker** will read from *War Against the Grannies*, sing songs and discuss the inspiration behind the comedy and great writing. Perfect for 7-12 year olds.

STORYTIME WITH STORYVILLE

Pull up a beanbag these school holidays for a rolling session of storytelling. This marvellous morning event will see three talented actors sharing a range of classic and contemporary kids' books. Perfect for 4-8 year olds.


Presented in partnership with Storyville, an Equity Foundation initiative

RICHARD ROXBURGH IN CONVERSATION

Actor and children's author and illustrator, **Richard Roxburgh**, will chat with broadcaster and comedian **Mesheh Laurie** about his new book *Arnie and the Grime Wave*. The pair will talk about writing, sketching and general silliness, including his fictional invention the *Fartex 120Y*. Perfect for 7-12 year olds.




THE SHOW OF THE YEAR 2016



will was returned (only on made

HARMONTOWN

SCRIBIMUS... INTELLECTUM

After getting fired from his own show, *Community*, in its third season (he was brought back for its celebrated fifth), he turned his attention to his live comedy show and podcast, *Harmontown*. The weekly show – co-hosted in LA by **Jeff B. Davis** and featuring a stable of hilarious, sometimes eccentric regular guests – has earned a devoted international fan-base, and is the subject of the celebrated *Harmontown* documentary.

Unscripted, unpredictable and sometimes uninged, it's a show where stand-up meets self-help and star cameos are squeezed in between live *Dungeons & Dragons* sessions. Harmon will be joined by Davis as well as much-loved series regular, **Spencer Crittenden**, for a night of fast, loose and unruly comedy.



FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER
at the Comedy Theatre
Time: 8:00pm – 10:00pm
Tickets: \$16.50, plus \$3 booking fee (per transaction)

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SEASON
THREE
2016

JULY
& AUGUST



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

REVOLTING AND
RIDICULOUS
A ROALD DAHL
RETROSPECTIVE

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



The breadth and density of what we do at the Wheeler Centre — the volume of events and activities and their sheer eclecticism — can make it hard to talk about a year's achievements in ways that feel like they do it justice. It would be too easy to make these Director's messages a roll call of names: of our partners, of the themes we've tackled and of the extraordinary guests we've hosted on our stage. But this report can give you an idea of that.

Instead I'd like to point to two events from the year that epitomise what we're trying to do. Ira Glass's extraordinary show, *Three Acts, Two Dancers, One Radio Host* was an improbable, category-defining exploration of ideas. As Glass himself admits in the show, dance and public radio are an unlikely combination. We're constantly looking for ways to tell stories differently; to surprise, to push the boundaries, to connect with audiences in unexpected ways. This show did all that and more. Plus, with two sold-out shows in the State Theatre, terrific work with a major cultural partner in Arts Centre Melbourne, and some private opportunities for emerging radio-makers and storytellers to learn from Glass in a workshop environment, the echoes and impact of the show keep being felt.

The other event I'd single out (in a year with more than 212) is the forum we held on recidivism and the justice system, called *Crime and Punishment* and hosted by Madeleine Morris. A difficult conversation, often ill-served by our media and public sphere, the event incorporated people whose lived experiences gave a unique perspective on the topic. Again in partnership — this time with Arts House, to complement and support their theatre programme — this discussion embodied the Centre's commitment to engaging events where the audience aren't just hearing from talking heads and usual suspects.

On all measures — financially, creatively, in our cultural leadership and our relationship with our audiences — 2016 was another bumper year. We couldn't have done it without an extraordinary staff, a dedicated and imaginative board and the ongoing support of the State Government through Creative Victoria, our donors, partners and supporters (most notably Tony and Maureen Wheeler, our patrons) and our audiences. When talking to guests and partners from outside Victoria, we often hear the same phrase: 'I wish we had a Wheeler Centre'. We know how lucky we are.

Michael Williams
Director



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



2016 was another significant year in the growth, creativity and development of the Wheeler Centre. Hundreds of events, podcasts and videos showcased thousands of ideas that prodded, provoked and stimulated our audiences.

The talent on our stages throughout the year was prodigious. It included writers and storytellers like Jeanette Winterson, Jonathan Franzen, Simon Winchester, Carrie Brownstein, Miranda July, Drusilla Modjeska, Malcolm Knox, Kim Gordon, Maxine Beneba Clarke, Muriel Barbery and Masha Gessen; thinkers like Shen Narayanasamy, David Suzuki, Naomi Oreskes, Lindsay Tanner, Clementine Ford, Anne Summers and Tim Flannery; journalists like Annabel Crabb, Stan Grant and Leigh Sales; podcasters like Andrew Denton, PJ Vogt and Jad Abumrad; funny people like Judith Lucy and hometown singer-songwriter Paul Kelly, who attracted a large crowd early on a Saturday morning last April to hear songs from his three-volume collection of Shakespeare's works to mark the 400th anniversary of the bard's death.

Even that catalogue of performers only begins to scratch the diverse, vibrant surface of another year in the life of the Wheeler Centre – a place that all of us on the board feel immensely proud to be a part of.

Eric Beecher
Chairman



ABOUT THE WHEELER CENTRE

OUR MISSION

The Wheeler Centre exists to drive the development and celebration of literature in Melbourne and beyond and, to foster broad public engagement in books, writing and ideas. We aspire to be nationally and internationally renowned as a leading institution for the art of conversation, and a champion of the transformative power of informed public discussion and debate.

OUR PRINCIPLES

The Wheeler Centre pursues a variety of activities, which are underpinned by six principles. Our principles express our aspirations as a leading Australian literary arts and cultural institution. They give shape to our creative initiatives and drive our relationship to audiences and the community.



Championing Writers and Writing

We celebrate the contribution Australian authors make to our cultural and intellectual life. We offer new channels for writers to engage with readers, aim to make it easier to live and work as a professional writer in this country, and promote the achievements of writers across all genres. Writers are the backbone of Australia's literary reputation; their work permeates our society and without them, the Wheeler Centre wouldn't exist.



Supporting the Literary Sector

We aim to be Australia's leading literary organisation and a hub for Melbourne's vibrant writing sector. In this capacity, we support the health and vitality of the entire writing and publishing ecosystem. From individual writers and small literary organisations to publishers, booksellers and readers, we support our partners, colleagues, and stakeholders to create their best work.



Elevating Public Conversation

We are dedicated to supporting and strengthening conversations throughout our community. We aim to raise the act of public conversation to an art-form and be a major catalyst for engaged cultural discourse in Australia. We are a key facilitator for the conversations that matter for engaged citizens: these conversations enrich lives, change mindsets, and build social cohesion and identity.



Engaging Audiences

Conversations require multiple voices and perspectives. Writers develop new vocabularies, hone their argument and test character; audiences probe ideas, and ask questions that expose dark areas to light. Together this constantly evolving community advances knowledge and recommits to a culture of analysis, curiosity, and connection. We endeavour to engage audiences through a variety of channels that embody our commitment to dialogue.



Exemplifying Inclusion and Accessibility

We are dedicated to the principle of universal accessibility. We strive to reach the broadest communities possible and are committed to embracing linguistic and cultural diversity on stage. We programme eclectic and inclusive subject matters and literary styles that appeal to as wide an audience as possible and deliver our programme in accessible locations across Melbourne and Victoria, with a growing focus on digital content for our national audiences. As a central tenant of accessibility, around eighty percent of the Centre's year-long programme is free and over 70% is filmed for digital broadcast.



Future-proofing our Approach

We are building a national and international reputation as a high-performing and unique cultural institution. Our achievements to date have required significant resources and an accelerated mode of operating. In the next stage of our life, the Centre will continue to be ambitious and innovative while consolidating the means required to do so. We must maintain our current level of output, build capacity for new ventures, and ensure that we have created the best possible conditions for the company's future.



THE STORY SO FAR



1,828 public conversations and events, giving 2,858 speakers a platform for their writing and ideas.



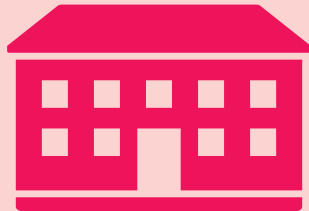
102 Hot Desk Fellowships have been awarded to date, supporting emerging writers and 22 Hot Desk Fellowships in 2016. 125 writers have been employed as judges for awards.



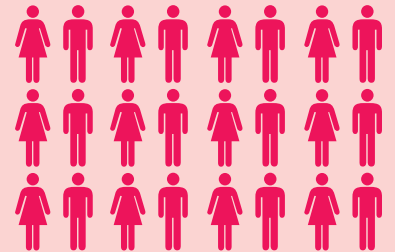
In addition to 1,200 videos of talks, performances and interviews, we now offer over 1,100 podcast episodes, alongside 2,400 original articles in total.



80% of our events are free each year, 70% of our events are available digitally for anyone to listen or watch online.



6 literary organisations are housed in the Wheeler Centre hub. More than 250 other arts and community organisations have utilised the building facilities for their own endeavours.



310,734 audience members joined our conversations with 90% of the total number of audiences located in metropolitan and outer metropolitan Melbourne, 8% regional Victoria and 2% from interstate.



2016 SNAPSHOT

212

212 public conversations and events, giving 658 speakers a platform for their writing and ideas.

- Facebook: 28,540
- Twitter: 42,028
- Instagram: 7,940
- YouTube: 3,200

508,594 views and 6,393,595 minutes have been spent on YouTube to date with 18% of those video views in Australia; 34% were from the US, and 12% from the UK.

2,249,312 sessions

2,249,312 sessions in 2016 (155.06% increase on previous year) took place on our website.

45.6K

Our wonderful community of Wheeler Weekly newsletter subscribers reached 45,672.

40%

40% of events have taken place in partnership with other major cultural institutions, community groups, festivals and arts organisations.



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2016: Blockbuster events, our focus on podcasting and a performance space upgrade.

Another year of smart, passionate and entertaining talks began with our programme jam-packed with superstars. David Walsh, Miranda July, Carrie Brownstein and Kim Gordon were among the highlights. In addition to our live events, our increased focus on podcasting was brought to the fore and 2016 saw the Wheeler Centre proudly publish Andrew Denton's extraordinary podcast *Better Off Dead*. We hosted podcasters extraordinaire: Annabel Crabb and Leigh Sales, PJ Vogt, Starlee Kine, Hrishikesh Hirway, Harmontown, Jad Abumrad and Ira Glass in our new series, *Invasion of the Pod People*.

In the winter months, the Wheeler Centre underwent an upgrade to its performance space facilities. We took this opportunity to venture out into new venues throughout Melbourne, including a residency at The Toff in Town. There we hosted favorites from our regular series *Erotic Fan Fiction* and *Bedtime Stories*, plus special performances of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* set to modern jazz by Australian composer Darrin Archer and performed with a jazz band and slam poet, Maxine Beneba Clarke.

Our programme of events – released across five seasons throughout the year – continued to champion public conversation facilitated by an extraordinary line-up of people who are worth listening to, topics that deserve our time and our open curious minds.

HIGHLIGHTS

2016 Gala: The Book that Changed Me

At the 2016 Gala Night of Storytelling, ten of Australia's best thinkers, writers, entertainers and storytellers shared how and why certain books have shaped their thinking. From funny to provocative, to poignant and profound, each speaker shared those fate-changing moments of communion between writer and reader.

Speakers included Susan Carland on Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, Kon Karapanagiotidis on Martin Luther King Jr's *Strength to Love*, Lee Lin Chin on William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Uncle Jack Charles on the Bible and Russel Howcroft on Isaac Asimov's *Nine Tomorrows*, and Anna Funder shared her relationship with Christina Stead's Australian classic, *The Man Who Loved Children*. Nakkiah Lui gave a moving account on the influence of *Dutchman*, by Amiri Baraka, Tony Windsor spoke on Leon Uris' *Mila 18*, Graeme Simsion spoke on Joe Queenan's *The Unkindest Cut*, and singer-songwriter Sarah Blasko spoke about Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

PRINCIPLES:



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Russel Howcroft
Kon Karapanagiotidis
Nakkiah Lui
Graeme Simson

SATURDAY 13 FEBRUARY

TWO...
ONE RADIO...
Ira Glass,
Monica Bill Barnes,
Anna Bass

Arts Centre Melbourne

THURSDAY 14 &
at State Theatre, Art
Time: 8:00pm - 9:45pm
Tickets:
Arts Centre Melbourn
Arts Reserve. A trans
Ticketmaster: \$90
A transaction fee
Groups tickets 4
The above fees

THE POD PEOPLE

RADIOLAB, RISK AND GENIUS
Jad Abumrad and Andrew Denton

Jad Abumrad and his Radiolab co-host, NPR legend Robert Krulwich, have been credited with creating a new aesthetic for broadcast journalism. Admired for its gentle explorations of big questions, the show has been collecting listeners and numerous awards, since long before it came to the mainstream's door.

LOST CHILD!
Miranda July

Miranda July is a true polymath whose body of work spans several disciplines. At the Melbourne Town Hall, she will discuss the making of her new film and performances and...

Blak & Bright: The Victorian Indigenous Literary Festival

Over four days, from 18–21 February 2016, the Wheeler Centre presented the inaugural Victorian Indigenous Literary Festival in partnership with FNAWN, Australian Poetry, Emerging Writers' Festival, Express Media, Melbourne Writers Festival, Small Press Network and Writer's Victoria. Jane Harrison was engaged by the Wheeler Centre as Festival Officer. The festival featured more than 60 Indigenous writers and artists trading yarns, songs, ideas and advice in masterclasses, panel discussions, readings and launches.

Highly acclaimed author Anita Heiss 'unpacked the Blak' in the funny and challenging, rapid-fire event **20 Reasons You Should Read Blak**. Here she presented 20 reasons why and how you should read Indigenous literature reading excerpts from 20 Blak books with two of our finest Indigenous actors, Pauline Whyman and Greg Fryer.

The **Blak Gala: Stories Behind the Songs**, presented in partnership with Songlines, showcased heartfelt musical performances alongside powerful and honest narratives connecting country, community and family. This event was hosted by Tammy Anderson and featured James Henry and Monica Weightman, with special guest Kutcha Edwards.

PRINCIPLES:



The Di Gribble Argument: Shen Narayanasamy on the Great Immigration Con

The Di Gribble Argument is an annual occasion to remember the late publisher, editor and businesswoman Diana Gribble and to celebrate her legacy. Over dinner in the Regent Theatre's Plaza Ballroom on Tuesday 4 October – and later that week in a free event at the Wheeler Centre – audiences heard a provocative proposition – and considered responses from guests.

This year we took on one of the most intractable conversations in Australian life: stopping the boats. Human rights campaigner **Shen Narayanasamy** posited an argument that looked at the immigration system in its entirety, one that replaced catchphrases with a broader, deeper perspective; one that actually proposed solutions.

Joining Shen were CFMEU National Secretary Dave Noonan, economist, lawyer and public servant Allan Fels, journalist and author George Megalogenis and politician Anna Burke. The panel brought together business, government and social threads to detonate the dead-end nature of this debate.

PRINCIPLES:



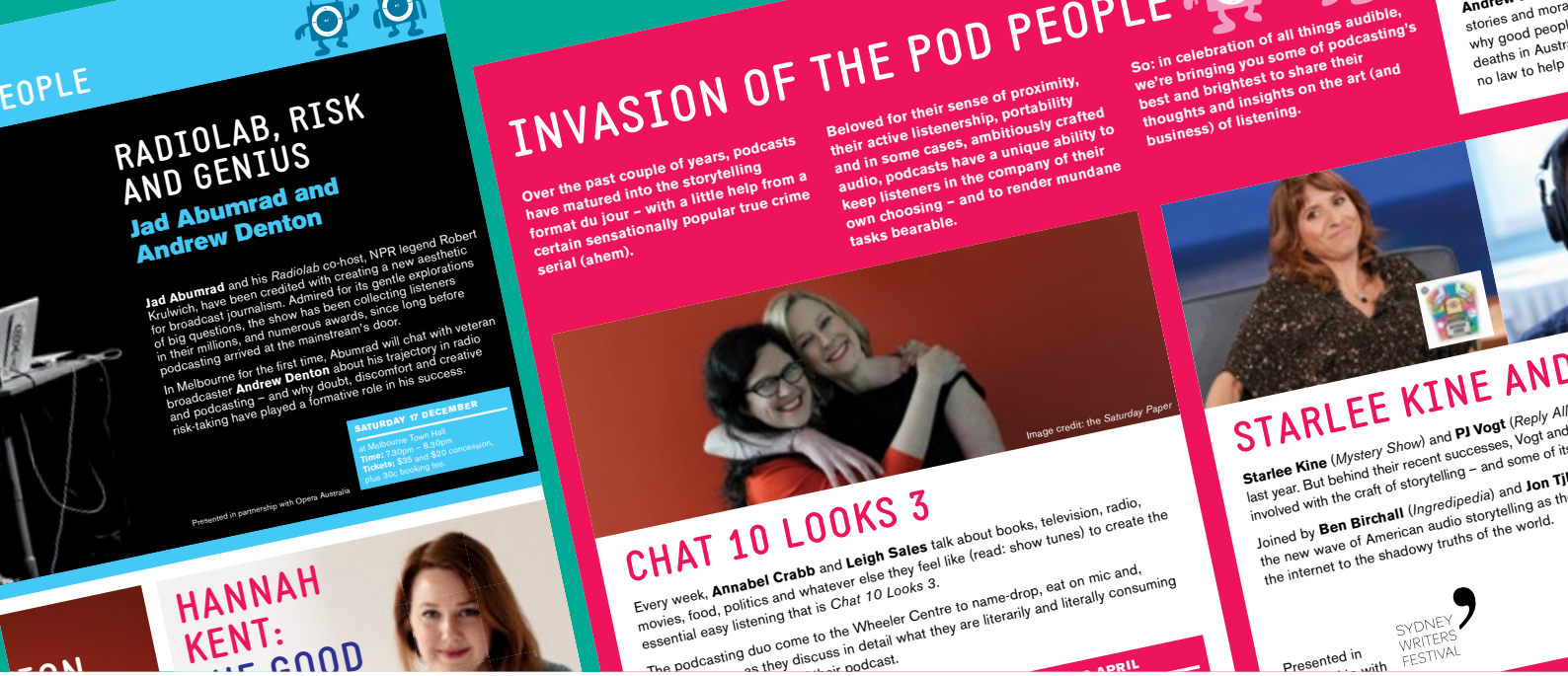
Star Speakers: Carrie Brownstein, Miranda July, Kim Gordon and Ira Glass

2016 saw the Wheeler Centre continue to deliver great programming, featuring influential and one-of-a-kind talent.

Carrie Brownstein of Sleater-Kinney fame dropped by for a chat with Myf Warhurst at Melbourne Town Hall. The pair discussed Carrie's memoir, *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl*, pop music, fandom, the process of writing – and the act of performance, on the page and stage.

Filmmaker, artist and writer **Miranda July** also appeared at Melbourne Town Hall in a special event presented in partnership with ACMI. With moments of interactive performance, video clips and short readings, this was an opportunity to explore the unique inner world of a startlingly original artist.

Artist, record producer and founding member of noise-rock pioneers Sonic Youth, **Kim Gordon** is a cornerstone of American experimental rock. In conversation with Fee B-Squared at the Astor Theatre, Gordon spoke about her memoir, *Girl in a Band*, rock, rebellion and resilience.



Invasion of the Pod People

Host and creator of the public radio programme *This American Life*, **Ira Glass** came to Melbourne with a contemporary dance production – *Three Acts, Two Dancers, One Radio Host*. Presented in partnership with Arts Centre Melbourne, this funny, moving and highly original performance combined live radio interviews restaged as dance pieces, with Ira collaborating with two extraordinary dancers, Anna Bass and Monica Bill Barnes. Audiences at two sell-out shows at Arts Centre Melbourne’s State Theatre were treated on a unique and unforgettable performance featuring an icon of contemporary American storytelling.

PRINCIPLES:



The Wheeler Centre’s new series, *Invasion of the Pod People*, brought the best and brightest talents in podcasting to share their thoughts and insights on the art (and business) of listening. Across the year we hosted a number of Australian and international podcasters.

Annabel Crabb and **Leigh Sales** recorded a live episode of *Chat 10 Looks 3*, their podcast about books, television, radio, movies, food, politics and whatever else they feel like (read: show tunes) to create the essential easy listening that is *Chat 10 Looks 3*.

PJ Vogt of *Reply All* fame shared his thoughts on the new wave of American audio storytelling – from the dark corners of the internet to the shadowy truths of the world.

Mystery Show fans were in for a treat as **Starlee Kine** offered her take on the art of a good (or revealing, or shocking) yarn – whether written, recorded or simply told.

We were joined by *Song Exploder* podcast producer **Hrishikesh Hirway** for a conversation about music, story and the art of the edit.

Co-hosts of the *Emperors of Rome* podcast, **Rhiannon Evans** and **Matt Smith**, recorded a live episode centred around Cleopatra VII. Musical comedy trio *Tripod* celebrated their 20th year with an evening of music, reminiscence and weird birthday banter at a special recording of their *Perfectly Good Podcast*.

Fans of Emmy Award-winning TV writer **Dan Harmon** booked out the Comedy Theatre for an unscripted, unpredictable and unhinged event with Dan and the *Harmontown* crew, Spencer Crittenden and Jeff B. Davis.

And wrapping up an extraordinary line-up of guests for the year, veteran broadcaster **Andrew Denton** (*Enough Rope* and *Better Off Dead* podcast) interviewed *Radiolab*’s **Jad Abumrad**. In Melbourne for the first time Jad chatted about his trajectory in radio and podcasting – and why doubt, discomfort and creative risk-taking have played a formative role in his success.

PRINCIPLES:





Audio Production

The Wheeler Centre's audio focus continued in 2016.

In April the final episode of Andrew Denton's *Better Off Dead* 17-part podcast, produced by the Wheeler Centre in partnership with Thought Fox, was released. Our ongoing event based podcast series continued, including **The Fifth Estate** and **Books and Ideas at Montalto**.

In June, prior to the federal election, we released *Housekeeping* – a five-part podcast mini-series about Australian democracy beyond the ballot box. Co-produced with Jarni Blakkarly this series had over 10,000 downloads.

As part of the Invasion of the Pod People series in 2016 the Wheeler Centre gave people the chance to get their genius podcast ideas and concepts off the ground. **So You Think You Can Pod** saw three podcast teams have their pitches prodded, workshopped and sharpened by our panel of audio producers – including *Reply All*'s PJ Vogt, *Soundproof*'s Miyuki Jokiranta, *Ingredipedia*'s Ben Birchall and the Wheeler Centre digital manager Jon Tjhia. The winning pitch was *The Island*, submitted by Michael Green, Andre Dao and Abdul Aziz Muhamat. As part of the prize, they received a six-month audio mentorship with the Wheeler Centre. Michael Green and the team from Behind The Wire began working with the Wheeler Centre and are releasing the nine-part podcast series *The Messenger* in 2017.

Developed in partnership with Audiocraft, the **Australian Audio Guide** is a handpicked companion to the best Australian podcasts and radio features. Launched in November 2016, the site lets you discover quality audio content and explore Australian audio culture with interviews, features and listening suggestions. australianaudioguide.com

PRINCIPLES:



HEY GIRL

HEY GIRL was a new, one-week series that examined the experience of girlhood through a feminist lens. Conversation in the series looked at race, identity, sexuality, social media and the representation of girls in fiction in the media.

Across six events speakers included, Maxine Beneba Clarke, Santilla Chingaipe, Rebekah Robertson, Marlee Jane Ward, Abigail Ulman, Judith Lucy, Mel Campbell, Candy Bowers, Clementine Ford and Anne Summers. The series explored the challenges that girls continue to face and talked through possible solutions for overcoming these obstacles.

PRINCIPLES:





The F Word Address: Caroline Wilson

On the back of the successful 2015 F Word series, the Wheeler Centre presented the inaugural feminist year in review with Australian sports journalist Caroline Wilson at Northcote Town Hall in November.

Intended to be an ongoing annual event, **The F Word Address** is part feminist stocktake, part personal reflection, from an outstanding Australian woman. Brave, bold and tenacious – Walkley Award-winning journalist Caroline Wilson, is a star of Australian sports journalism. At this special event Caroline reflected on the year that was, on AFLW milestones and the ongoing challenges for Australian women in sport and media.

PRINCIPLES:



Books and Ideas at Montalto presented by the Wheeler Centre

Back for a third year in 2016 the popular series of events at Montalto Vineyard & Olive Grove saw the Wheeler Centre transport a taste of Australia's best writing to the Mornington Peninsula.

On the third Friday of each month from March to November – audiences enjoyed all the elements of the very best dinner party – wonderful guests, good conversation and great food and wine.

Featured authors for the nine events included Lindsay Tanner, Toni Jordan, George Megalogenis, Stephanie Alexander, Steven Amsterdam, Bruce Pascoe, Mireille Juchau, Malcolm Knox and Drusilla Modjeska.

In addition to these regular events, two special lunches were hosted at Montalto with foreign correspondent and narrative non-fiction author Simon Winchester in February and Australian award-winning author Hannah Kent in September.

Presented in partnership with Montalto Vineyard & Olive Grove.

PRINCIPLES:



Good Morning America: The Election As It Happens

At Deakin Edge on the morning of 9 November, the Wheeler Centre brought together a panel of experts including Sally Warhaft, Ben Eltham, Jess McGuire, Crispin Rovere and Sophie Black, to provide up-to-the-minute coverage of one of the most bizarre election races in modern history. With live crosses via Skype to journalist Guy Rundle in the US, *Guardian* reporter Amber Jamieson in New York City and *Mother Jones'* James West, our panel recapped the highs and lows of this truly weird, 'post-truth' presidential race.

They also reminisced about the Obama presidency: the hope that preceded it, and the legacy the first African-American president left behind.

With free coffee in hand, provided by Small Batch, the early-rising audience unknowingly counted down to the Trumpocalypse – a result that not even the nerdiest of pollsters could have predicted.

PRINCIPLES:





Revolting and Ridiculous: A Roald Dahl Retrospective

'Never grow up ... always down!' This excellent advice appears in *George's Marvellous Medicine*, but it might have been Roald Dahl's personal motto. Has any other children's author known how to grow down as well as Dahl?

2016 marked the 100th anniversary of Roald Dahl's birth – so the Wheeler Centre decided to mark the occasion by getting revolting and ridiculous on stage with guests including Andy Griffiths, Jess McGuire, Kate McLennan, Tim Rogers and Anna Burke. Hosted by Michael Williams, the panel performed extracts from Dahl's vast body of work, delved into the recurring themes of his stories and discussed the life of this incomparable, sometimes controversial author.

PRINCIPLES:



The Wheeler Centre at the Toff

From late June to late July the Wheeler Centre threw sass at winter, stepped out into the world and hit the town, more specifically The Toff in Town, for a mini-programme of events while our performance space underwent a casual makeover.

The Toff in Town became the Wheeler Centre's home away from home as we slipped down Swanston Street to take up residence in the heart of Curtin House. Across five events we hosted favourites from our regular series, Erotic Fan Fiction and Bedtime Stories, and a couple of special events including two performances with Maxine Beneba Clarke reading Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* set to modern jazz music.

Presented in partnership The Toff in Town.

PRINCIPLES:



The Show of the Year 2016

The horror, the glory, the sublime and the ridiculous – 2016 served it all up in enormous doses. Once again, the Wheeler Centre celebrated a year's worth of highlights and lowlights at our annual Show of the Year.

Silver-tongued songbird Casey Bennetto and a bevy of the nation's most charmed and charming entertainers and writers – Jennifer Byrne, Tom Ballard, Osamah Sami, Deborah Conway & Willy Zygier, Geraldine Quinn, Shireen Morris, Nkechi Anele, Geraldine Hickey, Cal Wilson, Tim Flannery, Benson Saulo and Danny McGinlay – farewelled the year in style ... one month at a time through story and song.

We paid tribute to Harper Lee, remembered Prince, recapped Boaty McBoatface, and unpicked the Logies, political correctness and Arab Greetings. From AFL fairytales to election races and a Christmas singalong to boot, the Show of the Year was richly funny, poignant and everything in between.

PRINCIPLES:



VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS 2016

The shortlist.
Your definitive guide to
Australia's best writing.



Hot Desk Fellowships

In 2016 the popular Hot Desk Fellowships, once again made possible by the generous support of the Readings Foundation, gave 22 writers the chance to focus on their writing for ten weeks within the creative hub of the Wheeler Centre. For the first time, we offered two Hot Desk Fellowships for illustrators developing work with a literary focus (from a graphic novel, to a zine or an illustrated book cover), supported by the generosity of private donors.

The 2016 fellows were:

Didem Caia, Bec Fary, Kerrin O'Sullivan, Melody Paloma, Angelina Mirabito, Chris Somerville, Christine Sun, Paul Dalla Rosa, Jessica Knight, Miki Perkins, Nadia Niaz, Laura Stortenbeker, Stephanie Van Schilt, Inga Hanover (Illustration Hot Desk), Hiroki Kobayashi, Vidya Rajan, Lou Smith, Fiona Spitzkowsky, Veronica Sullivan, Fury, Lilit Thwaites, Eloise Grills (Illustration Hot Desk).

In partnership with the Readings Foundation.

PRINCIPLES:



Reimagining the Performance Space

The Performance Space is the Wheeler Centre's main venue for approximately 175 events – and live audiences of 20,000 – each year. It is central to our role as a hub for the literary sector as a key public space for our audiences, and as a function space for the resident organisations and a broad range of stakeholders in the books and writing sector.

With the support of the Ian Potter Foundation and Russell Mills Foundation, the Performance Space underwent an upgrade in 2016. This involved improvements to the stage configuration, including accessibility and branding. From a technical perspective, new systems and equipment have immediately increased the quality of the sound and audio output in the room, which also flows through to our online content. We are grateful to the Ian Potter Foundation and Russell Mills Foundation for supporting our vision for this project. Further works will continue in 2017.

PRINCIPLES:



Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

Awards play a vital role in honouring literary achievement by Australian writers. The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards are administered by the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas on behalf of the Premier of Victoria.

There are nine award categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Writing for Young Adults, Unpublished Manuscript, Indigenous Writing, People's Choice and the overall Prize for Literature, which is the single richest prize for writing in Australia. This year's winners were:

Fiction: *The World Without Us* by Mireille Juchau (Bloomsbury)

Non-fiction: *Something For The Pain* by Gerald Murnane (Text Publishing)

Drama: *Broken* by Mary Anne Butler (Currency Press)

Poetry: *Crankhandle* by Alan Loney (Cordite)

Young Adult: *Welcome to Orphancorp* by Marlee Jane Ward (Xoum Publishing)

Unpublished Manuscript: *Australia Day* by Melanie Cheng

Award for Indigenous Writing: *Ghost River* by Tony Birch (UQP)

The Victorian Prize for Literature: *Broken* by Mary Anne Butler (Currency Press)

People's Choice: *Fever of Animals* by Miles Allinson (Scribe Publications)

PRINCIPLES:





FUTURE-PROOFING OUR APPROACH

For the Wheeler Centre to make the kind of long-lasting, meaningful contribution to the social and cultural landscape that we envision, we must be as imaginative in our revenue management as we are in our creative endeavours. We continue to pursue a broad suite of income channels across all aspects of our activity. Individual donations from audience members, bespoke programming for cultural partners, philanthropic support for new initiatives, and corporate sponsorship for major projects are all essential components in making our ambitions possible.

Key initiatives in 2016 included:

Adopt A Word

Do you despair that doublespeak, political gobbledegook and corporate gibberish rule the world?

Are you concerned about the degradation of public language? Would you like a way to show your love and support for the Wheeler Centre, but just can't find the right words?

Throughout 2016, the Wheeler Centre continued the 'perfect scheme' to address these concerns, with the Adopt A Word fundraising campaign to help preserve, protect and nurture the building blocks of our books, writing and ideas. For an \$85 donation, individuals could adopt a word and protect it from the ravages of modern life.

Specially-themed words for Father's Day and Christmas campaigns were added including *irenic* (adj.) promoting peace and conciliation and *footie* (v.) to talk or behave foolishly; to horse around.

Ministry of Ideas

The Ministry of Ideas is our creative consultancy and bespoke programming service for corporate partners. With both new and continuing partners in 2016, the Ministry is characterised by shared values, relationships of trust, and strong brand alignment.

Off the back of a successful first year together, our partnerships with Hall & Wilcox expanded in 2016 to include unique events for the firm's partners and clients in Sydney. Activities continued to align interviews between leading thinkers, writers and commentators with a social occasion, bringing to life smart, passionate, and entertaining topics.

The Wheeler Centre In-Conversation Series continued to take place each month at Aesop Australia's head office. With a company culture that values the arts as an avenue through which to inspire, learn and communicate, Aesop is a natural partner for the Wheeler Centre. Continuing our bespoke programming series throughout 2016 has both broadened and deepened this relationship as we explored topics including climate change, astronomy, social justice and sustainability.

Conversation Starters

There is nothing hollow about true conversation. It is only through diversity of viewpoint and topic that conversations change minds, enrich lives, and build social cohesion. And while talk may be free, conversations are not cheap. The Wheeler Centre's major donors are literal Conversation Starters, making our year-round programme of free talks possible through their annual support.



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The Wheeler Centre is a key organisation in the medium-sized cultural sector, with an annual turnover of between \$3.2 and 4.0M. The Wheeler Centre values fiscal accountability, with a focus on generating new revenue streams and managing our cost base responsibly. The Board and its finance sub-committee monitor performance against budget for all activities and oversee the long-term security of the company. The following breakdown provides a snapshot of our 2016 financial operations. It is not intended to replace or modify the content of the centre's independently audited Annual Financial Statements.

EXPENDITURE

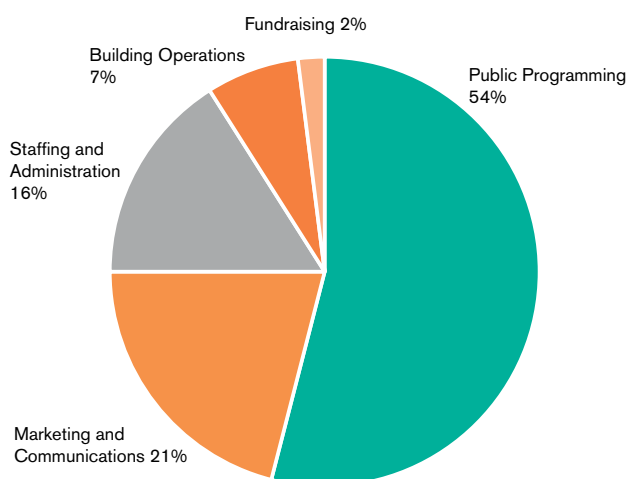
The Centre's annual expenditure patterns in 2016 demonstrate the high levels of resourcing required to support our mission:

1. Public Programming: Artists' fees and production and travel costs account for 54% of expenditure.

2. Staffing and Administration: Our daily programming and service delivery model is necessarily resource intensive and makes up for 16% of expenditure.

3. Fundraising: Various fundraising activities account for 2% of expenditure.

4. Building Operations: the operating of a physical hub in the dedicated wing of State Library Victoria accounts for 7% of expenditure.





INCOME

The public appetite for our daily talks and special events has only increased. Likewise, the support we provide to the sector has become invaluable to partners, publishers, booksellers, writers and literary organisations. The Centre is focused on securing income levels that enhance our ability to deliver on this demand.

We have six main revenue streams:

1. Box Office and Project Fees:

The Centre has consistently achieved ambitious box office targets and increased this income stream by 32% since inception. Box office and project fees account for 22% in 2016.

2. Investments: The Centre has a strong net asset position, underpinned by our Endowment from the Planet Wheeler Foundation. Our annual income from the Endowment includes interest and dividends from an investment portfolio that is managed by an independent wealth manager and overseen by our Board. In 2016, this accounted for 11% of annual turnover.

3. Physical Resources: A steady income stream comes from rental rates and venue hire accounting for 6% of overall income for the Centre.

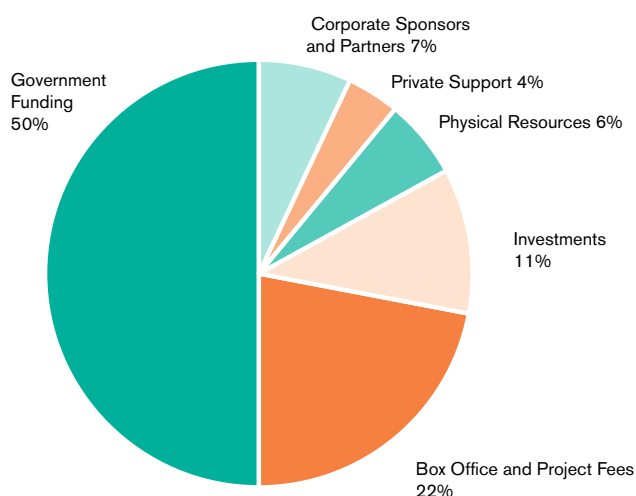
4. Private Support: 4% of the Centre's income comes from major Donors, Trusts and Foundations and fundraising campaigns.

5. Corporate Sponsors and Partners:

Overall levels of private support have remained steady at approximately 7% of turnover annually. The Centre is pursuing greater diversification within this income stream, with a reduced reliance on trusts and foundations and increased focus on corporate sponsorship and donor programmes.

6. Government Funding:

The Centre receives support for our activities from federal, state and local government through the arts and culture portfolios, accounting for 50% of income.





PARTNERSHIPS

Venues, publishers and bookshops

The Wheeler Centre is proud to partner with a number of local and regional venues across our yearly programme of events. Our ongoing collaboration with Australia's diverse publishing industry and our support of local bookshops demonstrates our commitment to bring writers and ideas to our audience.

Cultural Collaborations

Energetic and imaginative collaborations with community and cultural partners enable us to enhance our offerings to the community. Working with partner organisations also allows us to engage more broadly with diverse audiences.

Resident Organisations

Melbourne's designation as a UNESCO City of Literature recognises the invaluable contribution made by the following organisations, all of which reside in the Wheeler Centre.

Alongside these organisations, a range of volunteer-led entities work within the Wheeler Centre, through small-scale Hot Desk residencies: PEN Melbourne and Freeplay Independent Games Festival. Small volunteer-run organisations are a vital component of the ecology of our literary and publishing sector. The Wheeler Centre is proud to support their activities.



THANK YOU

As a cultural institution, we rely on the vision and generosity of our partners and supporters. Their contribution and commitment enables us to champion writers and writing, support the literary sector, elevate public conversation and produce an extraordinary year-long programme with 80% of events free to attend. We take this opportunity to say thank you.

GOVERNMENT



MAJOR PARTNERS

Media



Accommodation



Audio Visual



Wine



Champagne



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Reimagining the Performance Space



Digital Engagement (Regional)



PATRONS

Maureen and Tony Wheeler

CORPORATE PARTNERS



FELLOWSHIPS & RESIDENCIES

Hot Desk Fellowships



The Literary Collection



DONORS

Conversation Starters 2016

George and Rosa Morstyn
Wendy and Tony Hudson
Michael and Radhika Santhanam-Martin
Robin and Marylou Friday
Andy and Jill Griffiths
Wendy and Mark Rubbo OAM
Janet Whiting
Wendy Whelan
Eric and Sue Beecher

Thank you also to the generosity and support of previous Conversation Starters and other Friends of the Wheeler Centre donors who contributed to our tax appeal and those friends who adopted a word or became a regular giver.



OUR PEOPLE

Our Board

Eric Beecher – Chairman
 Gabrielle Coyne
 Russel Howcroft
 Tony Hudson – Company Secretary
 Joanna Murray-Smith
 Mark Rubbo
 Claire Wright
 Anita Ziemer

Our Staff

Director: Michael Williams
General Manager: Jaclyn Booton
Co-Head of Programming: Emily Sexton
Co-Head of Programming: Sophie Black
Head of Marketing and Communications: Emily Harms
Head of Sponsorship and Development: Kendra Overall (to September)
Office Manager: Lyndal Peake (to May); Sally Rosevear (from May)
Programming Manager: Helen Withycombe
Series Producer: Gemma Rayner
Project Producer: Amita Kirpalani; Sarah Greentree (to April)
Digital Manager: Jon Tjhia
Digital Writer/Editor: Sophie Quick
Digital Content Producer: Connor Tomas O'Brien (to May)
Marketing Manager: Shannon Hick
Ticketing and CRM Coordinator: Claire Flynn
Publicist: Kate Blackwood
Events Manager: Gabrielle Ryan
Production Manager: Johnboy Davidson
Accounts: Sam Ryan
Venue Coordinator: Leticia Parish and Fury Telford

Our extraordinary front and back of house team who ensure our events run seamlessly night after night:

Ania Anderst
 Colin Atkinson
 Aaron Bradbrook
 Anne Bravos
 Stella Charls
 Chris Cody
 Ruby Duffell
 Fiona Dunne
 Eric Gardiner
 Jess Hutchison
 Shamini Joseph
 Emily Laidlaw
 Jess Likar
 Kylie Maslen
 Rose McCormick
 Angela McMurray
 Darcy Moran
 Mark Novak
 Kevin O'Faircheallaigh
 Niklas Pajanti
 Leticia Parish
 Owen Phillips
 Ritchie Plunkett
 Seb Prowse
 Sophia Robinson
 Autumn Royal
 Jen Squire
 Billie Tumarkin
 Nikita Vanderbyl
 Tim White



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Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas
trading as The Wheeler Centre.

wheelercentre.com