



The Wheeler Centre  
Books Writing Ideas

# Books. Writing. Ideas.

Annual Report 2022

**The Wheeler Centre acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Centre stands.**

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Elders, past and present, as the custodians of the world's oldest continuous living culture.

As an organisation committed to promoting diverse perspectives and cultural exchange, the Centre recognises the ongoing impact of colonisation and the importance of reconciliation and respect for all First Nations peoples.

We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and create on this land and we are committed to learning, listening and working towards a future of shared understanding and meaningful collaboration.

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# Who We Are

**The Wheeler Centre is a globally unique not-for-profit organisation dedicated to celebrating and supporting writing and ideas from myriad voices, both from Australia and around the world.**

Located in the heart of Melbourne, the Wheeler Centre provides a welcoming space for writers, readers and thinkers to foster creative connections and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Through an extensive range of conversations, debates, readings, performances and discussions, alongside acclaimed development programs, the Centre explores ideas relevant to the cultural zeitgeist, highlights literary developments and showcases emerging and established writers.

The Wheeler Centre building on Little Lonsdale Street is home to ten other literary organisations; Australian Poetry, Blak & Bright, Melbourne City of Literature Office, Emerging Writers' Festival, Freeplay, Melbourne Writers Festival, Express Media, PEN Melbourne, Small Press Network and Writers Victoria.

Together, they further the Centre's commitment to supporting the diverse landscape of Australian literary culture and its role as a central figure in Melbourne's status as a UNESCO City of Literature.



Santilla Chingaipe, William Barton, Mindy Meng Wang 王萌 and Deborah Cheetham during Spring Fling for a panel about music and identity. Photo by Brett Walker.





# Message from the Chair

**It was a great honour to join the Wheeler Centre as Chair at the end of 2022 and I am excited to work with the Board and the wider team to build on such a strong legacy.**

My thanks to Julie Ligeti for her leadership as Chair having taken over from Susan Oliver at the start of the year, and to Rebecca Batties as deputy Chair through the transition.

It has been inspiring to see the Wheeler Centre emerge from event restrictions and lockdowns with such energy, choosing to make 2022 a year of experimentation and growth. With the generous support of Creative Victoria, City of Melbourne, our partners, our donors and our audiences, the year has been a highly successful one for the Centre, placing the organisation in a strong position to thrive in 2023 and beyond.

Driven by the lessons from the pandemic restrictions and heartened by audience engagement online, we will continue to present a hybrid programme of digital and in-person events, with both free and ticketed programming and strategies to make sure no one misses out on the opportunity to see the Wheeler Centre's thought-provoking programme.

A hybrid live-digital model has greatly expanded our ability to reach a broader audience. We launched a new website at the start of 2022 and focussed on high quality digital offerings to attract new audiences and deepen engagement with existing ones.

Throughout the year, along with our own core activities, the Wheeler Centre team continued to offer vital support to the sector through its work with the Centre's resident organisations, through collaborative programming, formal and informal submissions to the exciting process of envisioning a new National Cultural policy and offering many paid opportunities for writers and artists.

The team continues to forge strong and meaningful partnerships and relationships that support the Centre's work and amplifies its role in communities around Melbourne, Victoria and – following a new partnership with the Australian Chamber Orchestra – in New South Wales too.

Thank you so much to Caro Llewellyn for her bold vision, her creativity and commitment, and a heartfelt thanks to the enormously talented Wheeler Centre team for their wonderful work.

**Kate Torney OAM**  
Chair, The Wheeler Centre



# Message from the CEO

**The lights dimmed and the room hushed as Roxane Gay, one of our first live international guests since 2020, settled on stage at the Melbourne Convention Centre. Just moments before, the sound of more than 1000 people cheering had filled the room, with audience members eagerly anticipating the return of in-person conversation with one of their favourite writers.**

This hunger for live conversation was something I experienced many times in 2022 as, after nearly two years of almost exclusively digital events, we marked the return of live guests to the Wheeler Centre and brought together audiences to celebrate great writing, storytelling and discussion.

We welcomed some 542 guests to the stage and supported writers – emerging and established – and other artists through our dynamic programme of 162 events and development programmes including the Next Chapter, the Hot Desk Fellowships and Signal Boost.

The support of Creative Victoria and City of Melbourne's Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund enabled us to rejuvenate, innovate and experiment with our programming offerings, as evidenced by our exciting new series; Spring Fling: A Short Series of Big Ideas.

A ten-day celebration featuring local, interstate, and international guests, Spring Fling was a huge success, reinvigorating our events calendar and attracting a large cohort of first-time ticket buyers in addition to our loyal supporters.

Other 2022 highlights included the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards which awarded \$265,000 to talented writers from around the country; a conversation with Jonathan Franzen, who took time away from a personal birdwatching trip for a special event at the Capitol Theatre; and Mixtape Memories, our end of year gala featuring beloved Australian personalities speaking to the significant songs in their lives, performed by a live band.

Finally, at the end of 2022 the Wheeler Centre welcomed refugee and asylum seeker advocate Behrouz Boochani to the stage, as part of his first ever visit to Australia. Boochani appeared at a remarkable event hosted by Richard Flanagan featuring singing, tears and a standing ovation.

Reflecting on moments like these, I am filled with a renewed sense of purpose for the work we do and why we do it. I feel immensely proud of all the Wheeler Centre has accomplished in 2022, and the support we have been able to offer writers and the broader literary community.

It is because of our strong network of donors, partners and stakeholders that these exciting events can happen, and we are grateful to everyone who enabled 2022 to be a year of growth and success for the Wheeler Centre and fulfil our goals of promoting literature, making space for ideas and supporting writers.

**Caro Llewellyn**  
Chief Executive Officer

# 2022 in Review



**162**  
total events



**27**  
education events

**15**  
regional events



**102**  
collaborations with other organisations

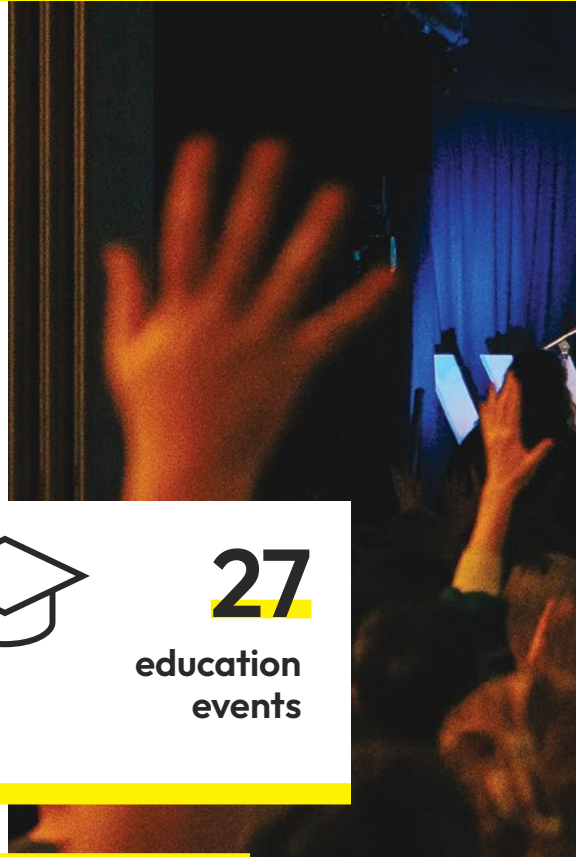


**36** additional venue hires


**542**  
speakers



**57%**  
Pay What You Can and free events








**19,346**  
tickets booked

**61%** of bookers were new to the Wheeler Centre's database

**49%** of ticket bookers returned for a second Wheeler Centre event in 2022

**1.2 million**  
YouTube views,  
with 388,653 hours  
watched



**41**  
emerging writers and  
podcasters supported in  
development programmes

Celebrating SMUT, a queer erotic fan fiction event presented in partnership with Sissy Screens. Photo by Matto Lucas.

# Events and Experiences

**2022 was a year of community and connection for the Wheeler Centre as we delivered a dynamic programme of 162 events featuring 542 writers and artists. Our audience, which included more than 19,000 live audience members and 16,000 digital audience members, was entertained by offerings including panels, conversations, readings, performances, literary lunches and galas.**

## Global Stars Return

In 2022, international guests returned to the Wheeler Centre in earnest. Highlights included author and feminist commentator Roxane Gay, British philosopher A.C. Grayling, American novelist Jonathan Franzen and Kurdish-Iranian journalist, activist and award-winning writer Behrouz Boochani.



Writer, speaker and cultural icon Roxane Gay was one of our first international guests in 2022. Photo by TJ Garvie.

'In 2022 our regional partners attended a productive roundtable consultation session, enabling them to connect and exchange ideas, insights and priorities, and allowing us to evaluate the regional programme and the evolving needs of our partners and their communities. It was a valuable opportunity to expand on the quality of what we can deliver together for audiences and a chance for our regional partners to meet directly with Wheeler Centre staff, building connections and relationships for the long term.'

**Lauren Taylor**  
Senior Programme and Podcast Producer

We also continued our digital Postcards From Abroad series featuring guests from around the world. In 2022, 'postcards' included Booker Prize-winner Salman Rushdie, cartoonist Alison Bechdel (in partnership with Melbourne Theatre Company), *Queer Eye* star Jonathan Van Ness and *The Good Place* creator Michael Schur.

## Local Luminaries

The Centre hosted an array of exciting local writers and speakers, showcasing some of Australia's most exciting talent. These included best-selling crime novelist (and former winner of the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript) Jane Harper, British-Australian academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert discussing her time imprisoned in Iran, AFL legend Eddie Betts celebrating his new memoir with host Tony Birch, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and bestselling author of *Big Little Lies* and *Nine Perfect Strangers*, Liane Moriarty.

2022 Teen Gala speakers Red Brazil, Audrey McKenzie, Charlie Mackenzie, Fig Russon and Arshia Rana took part in a special cover shoot for *Spectrum*. Photo by Simon Schluter courtesy of *The Age*.

## On the Road

We took books, writing and ideas around Victoria for our regional programme, collaborating with local venues, organisations and festivals. Key events included Bill and Chloe Shorten discussing family and politics at Castlemaine State Festival; feminist trailblazer Wendy McCarthy in conversation with teen host Tierney Khan at Ballarat Mechanics Institute; literary star Liane Moriarty at Castlemaine Town Hall, and a weekend of writing and art workshops for children at Warrnambool Art Gallery.

Our monthly Books and Ideas at Montalto series entered its ninth year as Mornington Peninsula audiences enjoyed a long lunch, great wine and fascinating conversations with guests including Dr Norman Swan, Jock Serong, Helen Garner, Christos Tsiolkas, Stephanie Alexander, Jane Caro, Pulitzer Prize-winner Geraldine Brooks and Miles Franklin Literary Award-winner Jennifer Down.

## Wheeler Next Gen

As part of our commitment to prioritising the voices of teens and young people across our programme, more than 30 young people appeared on the Wheeler Centre stage in 2022.

The Centre's inaugural Teen Development Day brought together 20 teens previously involved in our programme to connect them

'Teens came into their own at the Wheeler Centre in 2022, and it was a joy to see them take to the stage to share their stories. A new genre-themed storytelling series – launched as a part of Spring Fling with the double-header Fright Night/Meet Cute – showcased teens' stories alongside established Young Adult writing superstars, and the love in the room from the community was palpable.'

**Bec Kavanagh**  
Youth Programming Manager



with a community of their peers, introduce them to role models from the literary community and develop their skills and confidence in writing.

Two teen speakers, Zuva Goverwa and Zifa Tanner-Kamal, addressed an audience of more than 100 English teachers at the Victorian Association of Teachers of English conference in November about issues of the curriculum, content and engagement in the classroom.

All programmed teen and young speakers were paid for their expertise and gained valuable skills in the process. Media interest in our teen programming resulted in a three-page spread of our 2022 Teen Gala participants in *The Age's Spectrum* lift out, even landing the cover with an exceptional photo shoot.

## Spring Fling: A Short Series of Big Ideas

Our inaugural Spring Fling series in November delivered 24 joyful, inspiring and entertaining events and brought together more than 70 local, national and international artists representing the best and brightest in Australian and global speakers.

The series attracted approximately 5000 audience members across 10 days, as we welcomed speakers including Pulitzer Prize-

winner Andrew Sean Greer, Women’s Prize for Fiction winner Kamila Shamsie, breakout literary sensation Natasha Brown and Baroness Susan Greenfield to Melbourne, and had acclaimed historian Sir Antony Beevor join us via live stream.

For opening night at Melbourne Town Hall, Maxine Beneba Clarke, Chloe Hayden, Missy Higgins, Lionel Fogarty, Eryn Jean Norvill, Anne Summers and host Clare Bowditch shared their lightbulb moments: a defining shift that changed their mind, sparked a big idea or helped them blossom. And for our closing night event, *Queer Flings*, guests including Andrew Sean Greer, Benjamin Law, Ellen van Neerven and burlesque artist Evana de Lune shared their stories of pertinent flings with subjects ranging from mangoes, to vacuum cleaners, to musicals.

Other Spring Fling highlights included *Drag Storytime* at Queen Victoria Market, where fabulous drag artists celebrated stories that make us sparkle; a Writers Victoria partnered workshop with novelist Natasha Brown; a conversation about food and culture over lunch at *Mabu Mabu*; an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of Helen Garner’s life and work; and Shaun Micallef discussing his new memoir with Julia Zemiro.

### Partnering for Success

Approximately 60% of our 2022 programme was delivered in partnership with other cultural organisations, festivals and community partners.

We partnered with State Library Victoria across the year on a seasonal series of creative salons, featuring authors, poets and musicians including Rick Morton, Sarah Krasnostein, Andy Jackson, Allara, Michelle de Kretser, Manisha Anjali, Great Earthquake, Geraldine Brooks, Flora Chol and Mindy Meng Wang 王萌.

Our ongoing major partnership with RMIT Culture included a series of events in October as part of *The Big Anxiety*, the largest mental health and arts festival in the world. We presented live-cross conversations with US writers Leslie Jamison and Claudia Rankine; a special digital event featuring best-selling British-Swiss author Johann Hari; panel discussions on the intersections of disability, creativity and mental health; and a series of intimate one-on-one *Awkward*

Conversations between audience members and artists with lived experience tackling anxieties, habits and hard-to-talk-about subjects around mental health. The partnership also saw RMIT students undertake Work Integrated Learning internships at the Wheeler Centre, gaining experience in podcast, audio and visual event recording and editing work.



Journalist, activist and writer Behrouz Boochani.  
Photo by Ernesto Arriagada.

‘After being imprisoned on Manus Island for six years and told by multiple governments that he would never set foot on Australian soil, it was deeply moving to see Behrouz Boochani in Melbourne at the end of 2022 for his first ever public event in this country. Behrouz appeared in conversation with Booker Prize-winning writer Richard Flanagan, sharing his unique insight into urgent issues of border violence, human rights and creative resistance, and receiving a standing ovation from a sold-out crowd.’

**Veronica Sullivan**  
Head of Programming

'In 2022 we collaborated with many of the Wheeler Centre's resident organisations. We featured writers from *Voiceworks* in the Next Big Thing series, announced the Small Press Network's Book of the Year Award, and worked with PEN Melbourne to present the Day of the Imprisoned Writer. A highlight was seeing our excellent programming peers from the Emerging Writers' Festival on the Wheeler Centre stage launching their 2022 line-up.'

**Diem Nguyen**  
Programming Administrator

Our mid-year gala storytelling event, *Queer Dreams*, was held at the NGV Great Hall, presented in partnership with the Gallery to celebrate its major 2022 exhibition *Queer*. It brought together queer icons, including international drag sensation Courtney Act, and emerging artists to reflect on the unconscious optimism of dreams and the playfulness of reverie to consider what the future might hold for queer individuals and communities.

A new partnership with the Australian Chamber Orchestra saw the Wheeler Centre co-present the Encounters with Music series at the Pier 2/3 venue in Sydney. At these intimate and revealing conversations, guests including Leigh Sales, Helen Garner, Larissa Behrendt and Bill Henson discussed their relationship to music as fans and creatives.

In partnership with *narrm ngarrgu* - Melbourne Knowledge Week, we presented a special conversation with *Guardian UK* data journalist Mona Chalabi, as well as events interrogating ideas such as video games as art and the role food plays in the exchange of cultural knowledge.

### Spotlighting Writers

We continued our partnership with Melbourne City Reads to bring readers together and support Melbourne's remarkable literary culture. This initiative was launched by Melbourne city bookshops Dymocks Collins Street, Hill of Content, Mary Martin Bookshop, Paperback Bookshop and Readings during Covid lockdowns, and has developed into a regular celebration of local talent and writing.

In 2022 the Wheeler Centre hosted six Melbourne City Reads events featuring Jay Carmichael, Sophie Cunningham, Paul Dalla Rosa, Jess Ho, Myf Warhurst and Don Watson in conversation about their new books.



International drag icon Courtney Act performs at *Queer Dreams* at the National Gallery of Victoria. Photo by Tobias Titz courtesy of NGV.

## First Nations Focus

The Wheeler Centre prioritises First Nations stories and storytelling and is committed to exploring and discussing a variety of subjects relevant to First Nations people’s experiences.

In 2022 more than 70 First Nations artists appeared in our programme and a wide range of events had a particular focus on First Nations subjects.

These included a conversation between Bruce Pascoe and Bill Gammage on the remarkable agricultural and land care practices of First Nations people and a panel exploring Australia’s long and fraught journey towards centering First Nations peoples, cultures and knowledges with Teela Reid, Dr Megan Davis and historian Henry Reynolds, in partnership with Griffith Review. For NAIDOC Week we presented a panel in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service featuring academic and author of *Another Day in the Colony* Chelsea Watego; hip hop musician and youth mentor Johnathan Binge aka Caution; and Apryl Day, daughter of Auntie Tanya Day and founder of the Dhadjowa Foundation.

Return to Country: Repatriation and Resilience was presented in partnership with RISING and Malthouse Theatre and featured playwright John Harvey and director Jason

Tamiru (creators of *The Return*), along with senior curator Kimberley Moulton and host Daniel James. Finally, our partnership with Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival in March was a special programming highlight this year. The three-day festival took place at the Wheeler Centre in March 2022, with the opening night event co-presented with the Centre.

‘The longest-running series at the Wheeler Centre, *The Next Big Thing*, continued in 2022 and saw incredible emerging writers sharing their craft, often for the very first time. Seeing Jessica Au read from her novella *Cold Enough for Snow* in early 2022, and then be shortlisted for the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards later in the year, is a beautiful example of our ongoing relationship with new writers making their mark on the literary scene.’

**Jamila Khodja**  
Programming Manager



AFL legend Eddie Betts in conversation at the Wheeler Centre. Photo by Jason South courtesy of *The Age*.

## Event Partners

The Wheeler Centre acknowledges and celebrates the partners that make our programme possible.

### Major Programme Partners



### Regional Partners



### Official Booksellers



## Thank You to Artists

In 2022, 542 writers, thinkers, musicians and creators appeared on stage or on screen at Wheeler Centre events held in Melbourne, Victoria, around Australia and online. Across panels, talks, readings, performances and workshops, Australian and international artists debated, inspired, shared stories and exchanged ideas. The Wheeler Centre is deeply grateful for the passion, rigour, insight and generosity of all our wonderful 2022 artists.

Ben Abbatangelo / Jumaana Abdu / Courtney Act / Sam Adams / Allara / Stephanie Alexander / Barat Ali Batoor / Dennis Altman / Mama Alto / Esther Anatolitis / Nkechi Anele / Manisha Anjali / Avalon Anskey / Maree Antonopoulos / Evelyn Araluen / Robyn Archer / Hana Assafiri / Stella Assange / Atong Atem / Beth Atkinson Quinton / Jessica Au / Sarah Ayoub / Bebe Backhouse / Paul Barclay / William Barton / Ash Barty / Clem Bastow / Caroline Baum / Alison Bechdel / Kavita Bedford / Isobel Beech / Antony Beevor / Larissa Behrendt / Maxine Beneba Clarke / Namila Benson / Nornie Bero / Eddie Betts / Johnathan Binge / Tony Birch / Emily Bitto / Anna Blinks-van Broekhoven / Noah Bloch / Tilly Boleyn / Sunim BomHyon / Behrouz Boochani / Kasumi Borczyk / Nathan Borg / Clare Bowditch / Candy Bowers / Alice Boyle / Mark Brandi / Red Brazil / Geraldine Brooks / Natasha Brown / Rachael Brown / Vika Bull / Linda Bull / Bridget Caldwell-Bright / Bernard Caleo / Jane Campion / Lainie Cann / Jay Carmichael / Jane Caro / Ennis Čehić / Cerulean / Mona Chalabi / Grace Chan / Dandrogyny / Denise Chapman / Deborah Cheetham / Melanie Cheng / Santilla Chingaipe / Flora Chol / Tasneem Chopra / Greer Clemens / Ali Cobby Eckermann / Grace Coff / Claire G. Coleman / Katherine Collette / Annabel Crabb / Anwen Crawford / Alex Creece / Alison Croggon / Jaclyn Crupi / Sophie Cunningham / Denice Dabu / Paul Dalla Rosa / Satyajit Das / Ashe Davenport / Megan Davis / Laura Davis / Rhett Davis / Apryl Day / Jose da Costa / Michelle de Kretser / Evana de Lune / Richard Denniss / Tishya Desai / Julie Dickson / Grace Dlabik / CJ Dobson / Peter Doherty / Zowie Douglas-Kinghorn / Jennifer Down / Tom Drummond / Jonathan Dunk / Jo Dyer / Great Earthquake / echo / Astrid Edwards / Monikka Eliah / Sarah Epstein / Claudia Escobar Vega / Alison Evans / Declan Fay / Mahmood Fazal / Carly Findlay / Charlotte Finn / Else Fitzgerald / Richard Flanagan / Elizabeth Flux / Lionel Fogarty / Zana Frailon / Jonathan Franzen / Maureen French / Declan Fry / Neil Gaiman / Bill Gammage / Kerry Gardner / Helen Garner / Peter Garrett / Brook Garru Andrew / Robyn Gawenda / Virginia Gay / Roxane Gay / Mawunyo Gbogbo / Katerina Gibson / Gloss / Dan Gocher / Ashley Goldberg / Eleanor Gordon-Smith / Nayuka Gorrie / Hannah Gould / Zuva Goverwa / Paul Grabowsky / A.C. Grayling / Susan Greenfield / Kimba Griffith / Madison Griffiths / Eloise Grills / Fiona Gruber / Eda Gunaydin / Ryan Gustafsson / George Haddad / Leanne Hall / Stacey Hamilton / Finnan Hanney / Fiona Hardy / Johann Hari / Rebecca Harkins-Cross / Hilary Harper / Jane Harper / Karla Hart / John Harvey / Tristen Harwood / Chloe Hayden / Aleksandar Hemon / Jen Henry / Bill Henson / Sally Hepworth / Jess Hitchcock / Jess Ho / Poppy Holden / Chloe Hooper / Alice Horacek / Jackie Huggins / Eliza Hull / Shakira Hussein / Savannah Indigo / Jax Jacki Brown / Eleanor Jackson / Andy Jackson / Anna Jacobson / Pirooz Jafari / Daniel James / Leslie Jamison / Blu Jay / Ren Jiang / Mason Johns / June Jones / Toni Jordan / Stéphanie Kabanyana Kanyandekwe / Petra Kalive / Yumna Kassab / Bec Kavanagh / Debra Keenahan / Melissa Keil / Tiia Kelly / Cate Kennedy / Fenella Kernebone / Taqi Khan / Tierney Khan / Jinyoung Kim / Erin Kim / Luke King / Jess Knight / Chloe Komesarook / Natalie Kon-Yu / Ramona Koval / Sarah Krasnostein / Anna Krien / Elizabeth Kulas / Akuch Kuol Anyieth / Helen Kwok / Sarah L'Estrange / Jo Lampert / Brodie Lancaster / Marcia Langton / Laniyuk / Jack Latimore / Ange Lavoipierre / Benjamin Law / Jes Layton / Nam Le / Violet LeBeaux / Jeanine Leane / Riley Lee / Wen-Juenn Lee / Lise Leifner / Patrick Lenton / Maria Lewis / Bella Li / Jess Lilley / Rebecca Lim / Louisa Lim / Kameron Locke / Antony Loewenstein / Leila Lois / Melissa Lucashenko / Robert Lukins / Charlie Mackenzie / Brooke Maddison / Gemma Mahadeo / Urvi Majumdar / Moones Mansoubi / Melina Marchetta / Ana Maria Gomides / Ellie Marney / Konrad Marshall / Dirk Matten / Shannon May Powell / Jodi McAlister / Wendy McCarthy / Mandy McCracken / Andrew McDonald / Michael McGirr / Luke McGregor / Audrey McKenzie / Crystal McKinnon / Larissa McLean Davies / Janet McLeod / Izabella Measham-Park / Mindy Meng Wang 王萌 / Angela Meyer / Shaun Micallef / Tom Middlethigh / Janine Mikosza / Kate Mildenhall / Loretta Miller / Debbie Millman / Kylie Mirmohamadi / David Mitchell / Elijah Money / Jazz Money / Antony Monteleone / Ali Moore / Cath Moore / Kylie Moore-Gilbert / Liane Moriarty / Maki Morita / John Morrissey / Rick Morton / Kimberley Moulton / Sisonke Msimang / Brodie Murray / Peta Murray / Saad Murtaza / Olivia Muscat / Khin Myint / Sonia Nair / Brian Nankervis / Adalya Nash Hussein / Rhys Nicholson / Stephen Nicolazzo / Eryn Jean Norvill / Genevieve Novak / Poppy Nwosu / Sean O'Beirne / Amarachi Okorom / Louise Omer / C.S. Pacat / David Parkin / Jacinta Parsons / Bruce Pascoe / Sabina Patawaran / Rashmi Patel / Luke Patterson / Lee Pennefather / Patricia Piccinini / Richard Piper / Anna Piper Scott / Ruby-Rose Pivet-Marsh / Tali Politchuk / Sian Prior / Alice Pung / Bhakthi Puvanenthiran / Ben Quilty / Stef Raad / Vidya Rajan / Arshia Rana / Claudia Rankine / Nicola Redhouse / Oliver Reeson / Daniel Regan / Diana Reid / Teela Reid / Amy Remeikis / Henry Reynolds / Ariel Ries / Frances Rings / Jamila Rizvi / Izzy Roberts-Orr / Lucy Robin / Jennifer Robinson / James Robinson J / Lumina Rotar / Zan Rowe / Randy Roy / Kevin Rudd / Em Rusciano / Salman Rushdie / Gina Rushton / Penni Russon / Fig Russon / Micaela Sahhar / Leigh Sales / Joudy Sallam / Graeme Samuel / Mykaela Saunders / Cash Savage / Angela Savage / Diana Sayed / Michael Schur / Ronnie Scott / Andrew Sean Greer / David Sequeira / Jock Serong / Elif Shafak / Sami Shah / Kamila Shamsie / Glenn Shea / Jackie Sheppard / Holden Sheppard / Ben Shewry / John Shipton / Natasha Sholl / Bill Shorten / Chloe Shorten / Jodie Sizer / Tai Snaith / Anna Spargo-Ryan / Amia Srinivasan / Aurelia St. Clair / Sarah Stevens / Anne Summers / Josie/Jocelyn Suzanne / Sahana Swaminathan / Norman Swan / Louise Swinn / Sasja Sydek / Kumi Taguchi / Maria Takolander / Jason Tamiru / Christy Tan / Cher Tan / Margot Tanjutco / Aseel Tayah / Taybeh / Joelle Taylor / Sophie Tegan Gardiner / Anne-Marie Te Whiu / Thndo / Amy Thunig / Steph Tisdell / Omid Tofighian / Lucianne Tonti / Lucy Treloar / Thabani Tshuma / Christos Tsiolkas / Nao Tsuchiya / Elsa Tuet-Rosenberg / Theresa Tully / Colm Tóibín / Abigail Ullman / Ellen van Neerven / Jonathan van Ness / Kelly Veá Veá / Françoise Vergès / Eric Vien / Nerita Waight / Anna Walker / Phil Wang / Sally Warhaft / Myf Warhurst / Chelsea Watago / Don Watson / Richard Watts / Michaela Webb / Miriam Webster / Emily Wells / Wendy Whiteley / Vyshnavee Wijekumar / Lili Wilkinson / Michael Williams / Nikki Williams / Sunday Williams Starkie / Ashley Wilson / Kaya Wilson / Beau Windon / Jennifer Windt / Chris Womersley / Jennifer Wong / Panda Wong / Ben Wood / Mason Wood / Clare Wright / Fiona Wright / Anthea Yang / William Yang / Paul Yore / Fatima Yousufi / Avery Yu / Aisya Zaharin / Julia Zapparas / Alice Zaslavsky / Julia Zemiro / Sharon Zhang / Sui Zhen / Rufaro Zimbudzi / Nevo Zisin



# Production Highlights

**After coming out of long periods of lockdowns, the Wheeler Centre's Production and Events team faced new and unique challenges in 2022, including an increase in hybrid and live stream event formats and a growing demand for digital post-production outcomes. In tackling these challenges, the team successfully executed a range of events, across numerous venues and in diverse formats.**



The production team delivered a range of events including the 2022 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards at Melbourne's iconic MPavilion. Photo by TJ Garvie.

## Upgrading our Systems

Conscious of a recovery-focused budget in 2022, the Centre made essential technical upgrades where necessary, investing in equipment to enhance video editing, playback, and audio recording, and replacing outdated stage lighting in the Performance Space. These small changes made a big difference to the look and feel of the space during evening events and in their digital outcomes.

## Prioritising Digital

Digital offerings continued to be a crucial part of the Wheeler Centre's production outcomes with the team delivering a range of podcasts, live streams, prerecorded events, and on-demand video releases of past events. A growing number of events also incorporated digital production elements such as live-cross speakers, enhanced projection, the integration of interactive apps such as Slido, live-captioning and Auslan picture-in-picture for livestream events.

## Spring Fling Success

Finally, November's Spring Fling series was a significant accomplishment for the Production and Events team. With a large cohort of production staff new to the Centre and its processes, the team was quick to develop their skills for this environment, adapting to a wide variety of venues, technical systems, and workflows. The team delivered a seamless experience with impeccable front of house service, excellent audio quality for both dialogue and music performances, exciting and on-brand lighting, and first-class video production.

# Supporting Storytellers

## Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards

The 2022 literary calendar began with the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards celebrating the best contemporary Australian writing. Administered by the Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Premier of Victoria, the Awards recognise the most exceptional literary achievements of the year.

The Minister for Creative Industries, the Hon. Danny Pearson MP and Catherine Andrews announced the winners of the awards in February in an awards ceremony at MPavilion, hosted by musician, author and broadcaster Clare Bowditch.

Veronica Gorrie won the prestigious \$100,000 Victorian Prize for Literature for *Black and Blue: a memoir of racism and resilience*, which also received the \$25,000 Prize for Indigenous Writing. The Victorian Prize for Literature is awarded to the best overall entry across all categories and in 2022 was selected by an esteemed panel of judges, including Angela Meyer, Crystal McKinnon, Karys McEwen, Quinn Eades, Rinske Ginsberg, and Thuy On.

Other 2022 category winners included:

Melissa Manning (Prize for Fiction) / Amani Haydar (Prize for Non-Fiction) / Dylan Van Den Berg (Prize for Drama) / Maria Takolander (Prize for Poetry) / Felicity Castagna (Prize for Writing for Young Adults) / Keshe Chow (Unpublished Manuscript Award) / Rebecca Lim (People’s Choice Award).

In late 2022, the newly appointed Minister for Creative Industries, the Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP, announced that the 2023 Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards will introduce a new category, Children’s Literature, which will offer \$25,000 in prize money to the author/s of the best children’s book published in Australia each year.

The 2023 Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards shortlisted works were announced in December 2022, showcasing some of the most exceptional and diverse literature published in Australia this year. The awards continue to shine a light on the incredible talents and achievements of contemporary Australian writers, and the Wheeler Centre looks forward to championing this important cultural moment in the future.



Wheeler Centre Chair Susan Oliver AM, CEO Carrol Llewellyn, Dylan Van Den Berg, Veronica Gorrie, Rebecca Lim, Catherine Andrews, Felicity Castagna, Minister for Creative Industries, the Hon. Danny Pearson MP, Maria Takolander, Keshe Chow and Melissa Manning. Photo by TJ Garvie.

## Hot Desk Fellowships

The Wheeler Centre celebrated the tenth year of the Hot Desk Fellowships in 2022, with 21 fellowships offered to emerging writers thanks to the continued and generous support of the Readings Foundation and the Just Pretending theatre group.

The 2022 Hot Desk fellows worked on a diverse range of projects spanning different genres and styles, including fiction, creative non-fiction, middle-grade fiction, young adult fiction, playwriting and poetry.

Throughout the year, excerpts of their works were published on the Wheeler Centre's website to showcase their work to the wider community and provide a platform for their bold and fresh writing. The Hot Desk fellows were also featured across three events in the Wheeler Centre programme as part of our long-running series the Next Big Thing.

During their 10-week period at the Wheeler Centre, the fellows regularly used their workspaces in the Centre's building to develop their projects and forge connections with their peers and the resident organisations. We are thrilled to welcome these new fellows to the Hot Desk Fellowships programme which includes a distinguished alumni of writers and creatives who have gone on to achieve great success in their fields.

## The Next Chapter

In 2022, the Wheeler Centre's The Next Chapter writers' scheme awarded 10 outstanding writers \$15,000 to develop their work and matched each with an experienced mentor to provide support and guidance across the 12-month programme.

At the heart of this unique scheme is a commitment to amplifying underrepresented voices in Australian literature, offering opportunities to writers from marginalised communities and breaking down barriers that exist to accessing conventional publishing channels. Since 2018, the Next Chapter has supported 40 writers who reflect the diversity of Australian identities and experiences.

This year's intake of Next Chapter writers was determined by judges Arnold Zable, Claire G. Coleman, Fiona Wright and Jeanine Leane.

Thanks to the ongoing support of Varuna, The Writers' House in Katoomba, New South Wales, nine of the 2022 Next Chapter participants attended a four-day Varuna residency to work on their writing. As part of their involvement in the scheme, every Next Chapter participant is granted an alumni membership to Varuna. This year, due to the generous support of Griffith Review and the Graeme Wood Foundation, five Next Chapter alumni also took part in a week-long residency at Varuna.

### 2022 Hot Desk Fellows

Julia Bak / Aurelia St Clair /  
Kasumi Borczyk / J.R. Burgmann /  
Julie Dickson / Sophie Tegan  
Gardiner / Ahona Guha /  
Savannah Indigo / Ren Jiang / Tiia  
Kelly / Wen-Juenn Lee / Leila Lois  
/ Kylie Mirmohamadi / Maki  
Morita (playwright fellow) / Olivia  
Muscat / Amarachi Okorom / Arty  
Owens / Christy Tan / Theresa  
Tully / Miriam Webster / Mason  
Wood

### 2022 Next Chapter Participants and Mentors

Anne-Marie Te Whiu (Mentor:  
Natalie Harkin) / Brooke  
Maddison (Mentor: Peggy Frew) /  
Jose Da Costa (Mentor: André  
Dao) / Josie/Jocelyn Suzanne  
(Mentor: Bella Li) / Jumaana Abdu  
(Mentor: Hannah Kent) / Luke  
Patterson (Mentor: Alison  
Whittaker) / Micaela Sahhar  
(Mentor: Jeanine Leane) /  
Monikka Eliah (Mentor: Zoya  
Patel) / Mykaela Saunders  
(Mentor: Beth Yahp) / Tristen  
Harwood (Mentor: Tony Birch)

For the past four years, The Next Chapter has been made possible by a generous partnership with the Aesop Foundation. From 2022 onwards, the Foundation will begin to build on their success in Australia by turning their focus overseas, offering opportunities for communities across the globe, and, as a result, this year marks the final year of this incredible partnership.

While the Next Chapter did not open for applications in 2022, the scheme will proceed uninterrupted for the current intake of writers and their mentors, and the Wheeler Centre team will continue to facilitate publishing outcomes, connections and industry guidance for current and former participants.

The Next Chapter has had a significant impact on the Australian literary landscape, and we believe that its work is more important now than ever. The Wheeler Centre is currently offering opportunities for collaboration and partnership for those interested in supporting the continuation of this remarkable programme. Together, we can help ensure that diverse voices in Australian literature continue to be heard and celebrated.

### Signal Boost

The Wheeler Centre's podcast development programme Signal Boost, now in its fourth year, continued to provide essential support for emerging audio storytellers to develop their craft. This incredible programme is only made possible thanks to the support of the Ian Potter Foundation.

The ten participants of the 2021 programme finished in mid-2022 having produced numerous audio works, established strong industry connections and improved their skills through a series of workshops.

As part of the programme, more than 10 workshops on topics such as media law, refining creative ideas, and pitching to media outlets were delivered by industry guests including *Guardian Australia's* Allison Chan and community media producer Erin Dick alongside Wheeler Centre's Signal Boost Programme Manager Maddy Macquine.

Participants were able to access workshops to improve their audio skills and were paid to complete three audio works – a piece of sound art, a short interview and a feature piece – to build their portfolios and put development into practice.

Signal Boost participants continued to benefit from the support and mentoring they received through the programme, including Najma Sambul, who was hired by her mentors at *The Guardian* before embarking on a journalism fellowship at *The Age*. In the second half of 2022, Sambul joined Bree Steele of *iHeartRadio* and Amruta Nargundkar of *Heck Media* to judge applications for the 2023 Signal Boost programme.

The Wheeler Centre is excited to welcome another ten emerging audio storytellers to the programme next year.

### 2021-22 Signal Boost Participants and Mentors

Kirby Fenwick (Mentor: Gab Burke) / Eric Jiang (Mentor: Xen Nhà) / Carly Stone (Mentor: Michelle Macklem) / Elise Romaszko (Mentor: Sarah Mashman) / Faith Tabalujan (Mentor: Jo Lauder) / Daizy Maan (Mentor: Bethany Atkinson-Quinton) / Maya Pask (Mentor: Johanna Bell) / Michael Hartup (Mentor: James Parkinson) / Najma Sambul (Mentors: Allison Chan and Karishma Luthria)

### 2023 Signal Boost Participants

Kaspar Visser / Alice Garner / Vika Mana / Nartarsha Bamblett / Anna Emina El Samad / Daniel Tan / Loretta Hart / Melanie Bakewell / Kelly Bartholomeusz / Caitlin Ramsay

# Editorial and Digital Content

**The Wheeler Centre's audience strategy flourished in 2022, stepping away from two years of lockdowns and event restrictions, and focussing on the future of the organisation, engaging its long-term loyal attendees and reaching new audiences, with 61% of the year's audiences new to the Centre's database.**

## Reducing Financial Barriers

In 2022, approximately 57% of the Centre's programmed events were free or Pay What You Can. This new payment option allowed audiences to set their own ticket price with no minimum cost or booking fees applied. For the majority of paid events, an uncapped number of free tickets were available for First Nations attendees, with a No One Turned Away for Lack of Funds option also available. Of all events produced by the Centre in 2022, 67% were less than \$20 for a full-priced ticket.

## Ensuring Access

Following two years of largely online events, continuing digital and hybrid events in 2022 created opportunities for engagement for audience members who were otherwise unable to access our events, due to geographical, financial, health challenges or other limitations. All events were delivered in fully accessible venues, both for artists on stage and audience members, and more than 30 events in the programme were Auslan interpreted or live-captioned, with additional access services made available upon request.

## Digital Growth

Thanks to the generous support of the Aesop Foundation, the Wheeler Centre was able to undertake a website redevelopment which was completed in 2022. Led by local B-Corp certified web agency Portable, this development project improved web accessibility, streamlined the event browsing and ticket booking experience, and redesigned the editorial and multimedia content hub.

The Centre's incredible archive of digital content went from strength-to-strength in 2022 with 25 new podcasts and 44 new videos. The Centre YouTube library attracted 1.2 million views (+30% on 2021), representing 388,653 hours watched (+69%). Working with local broadcast service 5Stream, the Centre further enhanced the delivery of its live stream and on-demand videos, including capturing the first public Australian event with Behrouz Boochani, extending this milestone event's reach outside the auditorium and across borders.

## Content

Offstage and behind-the-scenes, the Centre continued the conversation with its audiences through engaging online content. In 2022, the Centre produced more than 130 blog posts which, in addition to the wealth of event videos and podcasts made available to audiences, included interviews, essays, extracts of new writing and more. With the aim of sharing artists' work and stories widely, the Centre spotlighted creators involved in other facets of programmes and events beyond the stage, including Spring Fling video content with florist Domic Hill, set designer Pilgrim Hodgson and children's book author and illustrator Anna Walker, who created a bespoke 'story house' for the series.



Children's book author Anna Walker with the Spring Fling Story House. Photo by Brett Walker.

# People and Culture



## Message from the People and Culture Committee Chair

**The Wheeler Centre’s commitment to cultivating a positive and inclusive workplace culture was further highlighted in this year’s people and culture activities, which aimed to celebrate staff achievements and identify areas for improvement.**

As part of this ongoing objective, we sought dialogue with all our staff via an inaugural engagement survey. As a result, we were able to celebrate and build on the significantly positive sentiment about the Centre and its purpose, culture, and strategy.

We also identified and began the implementation of actions regarding the physical office environment, as well as preferences around hybrid working arrangements, internal communications and goal setting.

The leadership team of CEO Caro Llewellyn, Daniel Coghlan, Simon Cotter and Veronica Sullivan was joined by Michelle Tyson Clark

in a newly created General Manager role, as well as Joe Toohey as Head of Finance. This team was instrumental in beginning to implement these changes to ensure the Centre continues to foster a supportive and caring work environment. Thank you also to departing leadership team members Gabrielle Ryan, Melanie Lin, Sophie Black and Sally Rosevear whose work was essential to maintaining a strong workplace throughout the lockdowns and into 2022.

We are immensely proud of the dedication and passion of our team, whose agility and hard work have enabled us to deliver outstanding events of remarkable breadth.

It’s a privilege for the People and Culture committee to support Caro Llewellyn and the team at the Wheeler Centre. Thank you to all our people, audiences, patrons, donors, and partners for your support this year.

**Chaman Sidhu**  
Chair, People and Culture Committee

# Meet the Team

## Staff

**Caro Llewellyn**  
CEO

**Nadiyah Abdulrahim**  
Digital Manager

**Joshua Barnes** (to March)  
Venue and Office Coordinator

**Sophie Black** (to June)  
Head of Special Projects

**Daniel Coghlan**  
Head of Digital and Marketing

**Simon Cotter**  
Head of Production

**Isabel Frias** (to March)  
Venue and Office Coordinator

**Alice Glenn** (to June)  
Youth Programming  
Coordinator

**Ambrin Hasnain** (to July)  
Venue and Office Coordinator

**Jamila Khodja**  
Programming Manager

**Bec Kavanagh**  
Youth Programming Manager

**Alex Kidman Jones** (August to  
November)  
Executive Assistant and  
Governance Manager

**Romy Ladowsky** (parental  
leave from July)  
Head of Development

**Melanie Lin** (to June)  
Head of Finance

**Georgia Lynas** (to July)  
Philanthropy Manager

**Maddy Macquine**  
Senior Audio Producer

**Andrew Mabbott** (to April)  
Events Manager

**Selina Moir-Wilson** (from June)  
Venue and Office Coordinator

**Diem Nguyen**  
Programme Administrator

**Sarah Occhino** (to July)  
AV Technician

**Xanthea O'Connor**  
Special Projects Manager

**Madison Pawle** (from June)  
Venue and Office Coordinator

**Courtney Percy**  
Database and Ticketing  
Manager

**Oliver Reeson** (to June)  
Marketing and  
Communications Coordinator

**Brigid Reid** (to February)  
Development Coordinator

**Sally Rosevear** (to July)  
Executive Assistant

**Gabrielle Ryan** (to August)  
Head of Production and  
Relationships

**Sam Ryan**  
Accounts

**Abhishek Singh** (from April)  
Events Manager

**Veronica Sullivan**  
Head of Programming

**Lauren Taylor**  
Senior Programme and  
Podcast Producer

**Kate Thorburn**  
Marketing and  
Communications Manager

**Joe Toohey** (from September)  
Head of Finance

**Michelle Tyson Clark** (from  
August)  
General Manager

**Natalie Williams** (from  
October)  
Digital and Marketing  
Administrator

## Board

Kate Torney OAM  
Chair (from October)

Julie Ligeti (from February,  
Chair to October)

Rebecca Batties (Deputy Chair  
to October)

Marcus Fazio

John Gibbins

Corrie Perkin

Julie Pinkham

Jamila Rizvi (from February)

Adrian Sculthorpe

Jock Serong (from February)

Chaman Sidhu

## Front and Back of House

Aiesha Amaya

Millie Baylis

Jay Crossman

William David Da Luz

Isabel Frias

Ruby Foster

Sally Grainger

Ambrin Hasnain

Franklyn Hudson

Aleena Johny

Christa Johnathan

Charlie Kerekes

Zoe Kaser

Joel Keith

Lise Leitner

Eloise Moya

Selina Moir Wilson

Madison Pawle

Elizabeth Robinson-Griffith

Greta Ryan

Inez Trambas

Emily Tipping

Nevo Zisin

Hannah Wu

Indi Wild

Jenny Cheng


Tarn Vu Nguyen


# A Literary Hub for Victoria

**The Wheeler Centre is more than just a performance space and events venue – it’s also a hub of creativity and collaboration for a range of arts and cultural organisations. The Centre is home to ten organisations in residence, each with their own unique focus and contribution to Australia’s literary landscape.**

  
**Australian Poetry** is a national organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting poets and poetry. It delivers the Australian Poets Festival and the annual OutLoud Poetry Slam competition for students, as well as publications like the Australian Poetry Journal and Best of Australian Poems.

  
**Blak & Bright** is a First Nations-led literary festival celebrating Indigenous writers and storytelling. Held biennially, the four-day programme features a range of events including panels, workshops, performances and book launches.

  
**The Melbourne City of Literature Office** works to promote and enhance Melbourne’s status as a UNESCO City of Literature, delivering a variety of literary initiatives and connecting with the global City of Literature network.

  
**The Emerging Writers’ Festival** is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to nurturing emerging writers and promoting a diverse literary culture. Outside of the flagship festival, EWF’s annual programme includes opportunities for emerging writers and arts practitioners in the form of developmental prizes, workshops, mentorships, the Vignettes podcast and more.



**Express Media** provides national opportunities for young writers to develop their skills and connect with the literary community through workshops and mentorships. Express Media also delivers an annual programme of events and publishes Australia’s premier youth journal, *Voiceworks*.



**Freeplay** is the world’s longest-running independent games festival. Established in 2004, the festival embraces the fringes, spotlights grassroots artists and game makers, and acts as a response to and critique of the status quo.



**The Melbourne Writers Festival** is a major cultural event that brings together local and international writers annually for an extensive programme of talks, panels, performances, and workshops.



**PEN Melbourne** is part of PEN International, a global association that promotes literature, freedom of expression, and human rights for writers. PEN Melbourne advocates for writers who are at risk and provides a platform for writers to speak out on issues of public interest.



**The Small Press Network** represents small and independent publishers in Australia. It supports and promotes members through a range of programmes and events, including the Independent Publishing Conference, and the Book of the Year Award.



**Writers Victoria** supports and connects writers at all stages of their writing careers. Opportunities include workshops, mentorships, manuscript assessments, grants, fellowships and Writeability, a programme for writers with disability.



# Supporters

**The Wheeler Centre wishes to express its deep gratitude to its supporters, donors, and partners, both new and existing, for their generous and life-sustaining contributions in 2022. We also extend our thanks to our cultural partners, independent booksellers, publishers, community groups, and other literary organisations, who have all played an essential role in hosting and amplifying the conversations that matter.**

## Government Partners

The Wheeler Centre acknowledges the incredible support received in 2022 from our major government funders Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne. In 2022, we were fortunate to receive support from Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne's Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund, which allowed the Centre to embark on innovative, new programming including Spring Fling and Mixtape Memories. These programming initiatives expanded the Centre's programming, embodying the quality, innovation, and impact and to provide the best possible experiences to both new and loyal audiences.

## Corporate Partners

Corporate partnerships are vital to sustaining the work of the Wheeler Centre, and we are grateful for the unwavering support of existing partners Montalto, Sofitel on Collins, Shiff & Company, JBWere and MinterEllison. We were also pleased to commence a new partnership with Furneaux Distillery to support the inaugural Spring Fling series and enhance the experience with their award-winning Untamed Gin.

## Donors

The Wheeler Centre is in awe of the generosity of individual donors. Their contributions are critical in achieving our vision.

Our Game Changers, who have demonstrated ongoing generosity, vision, and commitment to the Centre, deserve our enormous appreciation and thanks. We are grateful to George and Rosa Morstyn, Justice Michelle Gordon AC, and Kenneth Hayne AC KC for their incredibly generous support of our groundbreaking work with teens and educators. With their help, we continue to nurture the next generation of storytellers and break down access barriers to new audiences.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our wonderful community of donors, whose consistent support, advocacy, and engagement enable us to pursue new work, strategies, and initiatives. We appreciate every donation, as it makes a significant impact in ensuring the Centre remains vibrant, relevant, and continues to facilitate conversations that matter.

## Trusts and Foundations

Trusts and Foundations represented 8% of the Wheeler Centre's total annual fundraising efforts in 2022, enabling the Centre to extend its impact and support writers and artists through innovative career-changing programmes.

In 2022, emerging writers continued to benefit from the Readings Foundation's support through the successful Hot Desk Fellowships writing incubator project. This innovative programme provided 21 talented new voices the opportunity to work on their manuscripts in a supportive environment at the Wheeler Centre office, with some extra



Singing along to Em Ruscianno's cover of John Farnham at our Mixtape Memories end of year event at Melbourne Recital Centre. Photo by Jacinta Keefe.

financial support to help them focus on their writing. Thanks to the support of the Just Pretending theatre group, the Centre was pleased that an additional fellowship could be added for a woman (cis or trans), or a non-binary person, who is an emerging playwright.

The Ian Potter Foundation's generous multi-year support of Signal Boost has seen this unique podcast programme enter its fourth year, providing essential support for emerging audio storytellers to develop their craft. The ten participants of the 2021 programme were able to add numerous audio works to their portfolio, establish strong industry connections and improve their skills through a series of workshops.

For the past four years, the landmark Next Chapter writers' scheme has been made possible by a generous partnership with the Aesop Foundation. From 2022 onwards, the Foundation will begin to build on their success in Australia by turning their focus overseas, offering opportunities for communities across the globe, and, as a result, this year marks the final year of this incredible partnership.

So far, 40 participants have been recognised by this game-changing initiative, which has supported each writer with a stipend of \$15,000; matched them with a prominent Australian writer as their mentor; provided a residency at Varuna, The Writers' House, in the Blue Mountains; as well as helping make connections and guide their process through the complex world of publishing.

The Wheeler Centre has treasured the Aesop Foundation's four years of support for the scheme as a true model of trust, collaboration and vision, and with gratitude we wish them every success as they expand the Foundation globally.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the inspired support of our patrons Tony and Maureen Wheeler whose gift to Melbourne, the City of Literature, more than a decade ago, continues to enable and inspire all our work.

Finally, we remain indebted to all of our supporters, donors, and partners for their generosity, and we thank them for being part of our unique story. With their help, we can continue to support Australia's writers and storytellers and ensure that their voices are heard by those who need them the most.

## Donors

### Patrons

Maureen Wheeler AO  
Tony Wheeler AO

### Game Changers: \$25,000+

Michelle Gordon and Kenneth Hayne  
Mark Rubbo  
George and Rosa Morstyn

### Conversation Starters: \$5000+

Bagot Gjergja Foundation  
Brigitte Smith  
Wendy Whelan  
Tony and Wendy Hudson  
Janet Whiting and Phil Lukies  
Jennifer Gilchrist

### Enquiring Minds: \$1,000+

Peter Mattessi  
Jamila Rizvi  
Radhika Santhanam-Martin  
Glenda De Marinis  
Chaman Sidhu  
Keith Richards  
Fiona McGauchie  
Helen Walpole  
Carrillo Gantner AC  
Ricci Swart  
Brendan Luno  
Peter Murdoch  
David Bardas  
Sarah Yeomans

### Supporters: \$500+

Steven Williams  
Elizabeth Loftus  
Victoria Ponsford  
Marianne Broadbent  
Caro Llewellyn  
Henry Hocking  
Rachel Faggetter  
Luke Devenish  
Mike Pottenger  
Joshua Kinal  
Susan Parker  
Anita Ziemer

## Partners

The Wheeler Centre is deeply grateful for the support of our valued partners.

### Government



### Trusts and Foundations



### Corporate Partners



# Financial Overview



## Message from the Audit and Risk Committee Chair

**Following the difficult lockdown periods of 2020 and 2021, the 2022 financial performance of the Wheeler Centre reflected a decrease in COVID-19 Victorian and Federal government support alongside increases in live event income and associated expenses.**

In 2022 the Centre also experienced some reductions in revenue from sponsorships and donors. Combined with cost increases from additional events, this resulted in an operating loss of \$353,802 for the year. This does not account for a transfer of \$200,000 from the Wheeler Endowment fund, with the result after transfers of a deficit of \$153,802.

Our focus during the year was to continue the Centre's innovative programmes and closely manage our operations. In 2022 we developed a new major events operating model to re-engage with our audiences post-lockdowns. This operating model enables our audiences to participate in a larger range of high-quality events with local

and international speakers. All major events included in this model as high-quality programming, subject to Board approval, can be provided with funding support from the Endowment.

In 2022, we developed the Spring Fling series with audiences returning to live events and a positive impact on revenues. Spring Fling attracted over \$100,000 in box office sales, with 20 events across just over a week.

Spring Fling was provided with \$200,000 in financial support from the Wheeler Endowment as part of the revised major events operating model. Combined with box office returns, the event was a significant performer in 2022.

Major events will continue to be part of our financial operating model and will be included in the budget for 2023.

**John Gibbins**  
Chair, Audit and Risk Committee

## Operating Activities

2022 represented the first full year of live event activity following the Covid lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. As a result, the number of live events increased from 47 in 2021 to 150 in 2022, with an additional 12 digital-only events taking this year's total to 162. Events income rebounded as a result, growing to \$548,224 (2021: \$178,510). Venue hire and related revenue also improved, reaching \$253,554 (2021: \$173,811).

Recurrent funding from the Victorian Government was \$1.54 million in 2022, consistent with figures from 2021 and representing the bulk of government support for the period. Total non-recurrent government funding (excluding funding for auspice activities) for the 2022 period was \$631,834 (2021: \$1.02 million), with the variation from 2021 to 2022 coinciding with the conclusion of a number of pandemic support initiatives (totalling \$509,091 in 2021).

Sponsorship and donor activity also fell in 2022, to \$496,477 from a 2021 figure of \$778,131, related to multi-year funded projects The Next Chapter and Signal Boost winding down or being postponed, respectively.

### **Non-operating Activities: The Wheeler Endowment Fund**

The Wheeler Endowment Fund, funded by a gift from the Planet Wheeler Foundation, has been placed into a separate reserve. The endowment is managed by an independent investment fund manager.

The Deed governing this gift provides that it should be used for the development and provision of high-quality, additional programming.

At 31 December 2022, the balance of funds held in the Wheeler Endowment Fund was \$10.35 million. A withdrawal of \$200,000 was made in 2022 towards the delivery of Spring Fling.

### **City of Literature Office**

The Wheeler Centre has had a long-standing memorandum of understanding with Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council to support the City of Literature Office (the Office) and the position of the Office Director, which was extended again in 2022. The memorandum of understanding

stipulates Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council have agreed to provide financial support for the operation of the Office and the employment of the Director with the Wheeler Centre providing in-kind assistance to support the Office. All income and expenditure of the Office is administered through the Wheeler Centre.

Grants received from Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council are first recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until the funds are used for the operation of the Office, at which point the Wheeler Centre's performance obligation is fulfilled.

### **Blak & Bright Festival**

Blak & Bright is a First Nations literary festival based in Melbourne. It is a four-day festival celebrating the diverse expressions of First Nations writers. In September 2021, the Wheeler Centre entered an auspice agreement with Blak & Bright Festival. Grant and donations received for Blak & Bright festival are first recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until the funds are used for the operation of the Blak & Bright Festival. The Wheeler Centre provided both in-kind support and financial support to Blak & Bright Festival throughout 2022.

## **Financial Performance**

### **Operations**

The Centre's net operating income was a deficit of \$353,802 in 2022 (2021: a surplus of \$497,675). Net operating revenue does not include transfers made from the Wheeler Endowment Fund for operating activities, which totalled \$200,000 in 2022.

The net income from investments was (\$299,700). The net result from all transactions after depreciation and amortisation of \$86,979 was a deficit of \$740,481.

### **Balance Sheet**

Net assets of the Wheeler Centre amounted to \$10.54 million (2021: \$11.28 million) at the end of 2022. The Wheeler Endowment amounted to \$10.35 million.

Current assets decreased by 19% to \$1.48 million and total liabilities decreased by 5% to \$1.51 million. Total grants and income in advance/unearned income at 31 December 2022 comprised the bulk of the liabilities, at \$1.08 million.

Cash as of 31 December 2022 was \$1.29 million. Of this, \$339,475 comprises restricted funds for City of Literature office and Blak & Bright Festival programmes.

# Summary of Results 2022

<b>Financial Performance</b>	<b>2022\$</b>	<b>2021\$</b>
<b>NET INCOME FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>		
Creative Victoria - Multi-Year Organisation Grant	1,541,600	1,541,600
Creative Victoria - Premier's Literary Award Grant	265,000	265,000
Creative Victoria - Regional Tour Grant	30,551	37,804
Creative Victoria - Strategic Investment Fund Stage 2	0	55,625
Creative Victoria - Strategic Investment Fund Stage 4	0	100,000
Creative Victoria - Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund	284,384	0
City of Melbourne- Multi-Year Organisation Grant	51,900	50,000
Commonwealth Grant COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund	0	500,000
Other Government Grants	0	9,091
Event & Resources Income	801,778	352,320
Sponsorship & Donations	496,477	778,131
Reimbursements & recoveries	9,430	3,106
<b>Total operating revenue</b>	<b>3,481,120</b>	<b>3,692,677</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>		
Employee Expenses	(2,033,049)	(1,895,929)
Event Generated Expenses	(748,901)	(295,422)
Prize Money	(428,000)	(375,500)
Marketing and Promotion Expenses	(112,252)	(110,256)
Digital Publishing Expenses	(84,109)	(70,621)
Operating Expenses	(97,172)	(131,307)
Facilities Expenses	(331,439)	(315,967)
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>(3,834,922)</b>	<b>(3,195,003)</b>
<b>Net Income from Operating Activities</b>	<b>(353,802)</b>	<b>497,675</b>
<b>NET INCOME FROM NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>Interest Received in the Bank</b>	<b>3,978</b>	<b>3,571</b>
<b>Philanthropic Funds Flow</b>		
The Wheeler Endowment Investment Portfolio Movement (Restricted)	(103,678)	1,116,734
Distribution to Operating Activities	(200,000)	0
<b>Philanthropic Funds Flow</b>	<b>(299,700)</b>	<b>1,120,305</b>
<b>Net Income from Non-Operating Activities</b>	<b>(299,700)</b>	<b>1,120,305</b>
<b>NET RESULT FROM AUSPICE PROJECT</b>		
<b>City of Literature Office</b>		
Government Grants - City of Literature Office	381,291	257,329
Project expenditure - City of Literature Office	(381,291)	(257,329)
<b>Blak &amp; Bright Festival</b>		
Government Grants- Blak & Bright Festival	176,330	71,525
Other income - Blak & Bright Festival	41,622	1,200
Project expenditure - Blak & Bright Festival	(217,952)	(72,725)
<b>Net result from Auspice Project</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net result from transactions before depreciation</b>	<b>(653,502)</b>	<b>1,617,979</b>
Depreciation and amortisation	(86,979)	(52,737)
<b>Net result from transactions after depreciation</b>	<b>(740,481)</b>	<b>1,565,242</b>
<b>COMPREHENSIVE RESULT</b>	<b>(740,481)</b>	<b>1,565,242</b>

The Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas (trading as The Wheeler Centre) has the ABN 97 134 682 189. The Wheeler Centre is a Company Limited by Guarantee and is registered with the ASIC.



Drag artists Dandrogny and Blu Jay at a drag storytime event for Spring Fling. Photo by Laura Du Ve.



The Wheeler Centre  
Books Writing Ideas

