



NT Writers' Centre

**Annual Report 2016**

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## President's Message

This past year has been a very interesting and intriguing year for me, since taking on (much to my surprise!) the role of President of the NT Writers' Centre in May 2016! But I have to say that I have enjoyed being in the role of President of the NTWC very much; this is mainly because it is a great joy to be around people who are so passionate about what they do. And, through my recent experience of those associated with the NTWC, few people are more passionate about what they do than published authors, and would be published authors.

As happens in all our busy lives, this past year has flown by. and I am delighted to say that the NT Writers' Centre, under the excellent leadership of Sally Bothroyd, the Executive Director, has once again provided a huge amount of high quality activity for the entire Northern Territory. Those activities have ranged from the very successful 'Wordstorm Festival', held in May at Darwin (please see the Festival details below), through to the many workshops, and other associated writing focused activities (please see the details below) that have been held in Darwin, and elsewhere in the NT through the last year.

Whilst all the activities in some way deserve a mention (which they do receive in the following Annual Report), however, I would like to make particular mention of the highly successful, and now biennial, 'The Territory Read Awards' – many congratulations to all those who received well-deserved awards - and the inaugural 'Andrew McMillan Memorial Retreat' at Larrimah, undertaken by this year by Kylie Stevenson.

My thanks must go to Sally Bothroyd, our Executive Director, and Hamish McDonald, our book-keeper, for their tireless work in managing the Darwin Office, and also to Fiona Dorrell as the Program Manager at Alice Springs. And, finally, my thanks must go to my fellow NTWC Board Members for their enthusiasm and great contributions through the past year.

Professor Martin Jarvis OAM

President

NT Writers' Centre

## Treasurer's Report

The NTWC has had a number of people acting in the Treasurer's role over 2016 (Michael Haaren, Linda Wells, Dalton Dupuy), but there has not been a Treasurer for any consistent period of time in 2016. This is a situation the NTWC is seeking to rectify in the future.

A report from the long-standing bookkeeper Hamish McDonald indicates that the NTWC ran at a small deficit in 2016, mainly due to staff leave accruals.

This is in keeping with the auditor's report, which found the NTWC is in a "sound financial position". Our auditor is Brian Tucker who has many, many years' experience in auditing arts organisations, and has audited the NTWC's finances for many years.

**Sally Bothroyd**  
**Executive Director**  
NT Writers' Centre

## Executive Director's Report

After beginning in my role in the second quarter of 2015, 2016 has been a time of consolidation after the upheaval of a complete staff changeover.

It was fortunate that 2016 was the third year of triennial funding from Arts NT, and I'm grateful for the support of the Arts NT team while I was finding my feet in the role of executive director.

At the end of 2016, we were again offered three-year funding from Arts NT, which shows their continued commitment to the NTWC's goals.

The NTWC is also very lucky to have received a degree of financial support from the Australia Council, after considerable cuts to their resources in 2015. This amount will increase again in 2017, as we were successful in an application for four-year funding (2017-2020).

This was my first year directing the NT Writers' Festival in Darwin. It was an exciting time and I was pleased with the audience turnout and feedback. Highlights for me were our Indonesian guests, and the evening with Magda Szubanski, and Richard Glover's mother's day brunch were our best box office events.

Big thanks must go to the Alice Springs' program manager Fiona Dorrell, and the festival coordinator Cora Diviny, as well as our book keeper Hamish McDonald and the NTWC board.

### **Sally Bothroyd**

Executive Director  
NT Writers' Centre

## 2016 Program of Activities

### Workshops for adults

The NTWC held a variety of workshops throughout 2016.

Workshops throughout the year attracted a total of 123 participants:

- Graham Potts, Writing for Thrills (DWN)
- Barry Jonsberg, Getting Started (DWN)
- Mary Anne Butler, Story in Six Weeks (Series of six) (DWN)
- Leni Shilton (ASP)
- Meg Mooney (ASP)
- Lia Hills (ASP)
- Tony Birch, Short Story (DWN during festival)
- Beth Yahp, Editing Your Own Work (DWN during festival)
- Joanne van Os, Writing Memoir (DWN during festival)
- Toby Fitch, Collage Poetry (DWN during festival)
- The Art of Oral Storytelling with Spun (Johanna Bell and Jess Ong) (DWN during festival)
- Jenny Kemp (intensive two-day) (ASP)
- Natalie Sprite, Writing from the Body x2 (DWN)
- Toni Jordan, Dazzling Dialogue (DWN, PALM, KATH)

### Guided writer groups

These six-week series were led by a professional writer with the aim of sparking new writers' groups.

- Christopher Raja (ASP)
- Sue Fielding (ASP) x 2
- Derek Pugh (DWN)
- Glenn Morrison (non-fiction focus) (ASP)

### Workshops for youth

Our school workshop tour with four Wordstorm writers Laurie May, Zohab Zee Khan, Leisel Egan and Eleri Harris, thanks to a Community Benefit Fund Grant which meant the workshops were **FREE** for the remote and regional schools, and **reached an amazing 707 students over 34 hours of workshops** during one action-packed week.

- Darwin High School, 8 sessions (DWN)
- Katherine High School, 15 sessions (KATH)
- Beswick School, 3 sessions (BESWICK)
- Bulman School, 4 sessions (BULMAN)
- Batchelor Area School, 4 sessions (BATCHELOR)

Other workshops in schools:

- Valanga Khoza, Essington (DWN during festival), four sessions

Workshops for which the NTWC paid writer fees as part of our sponsorship of Young Author Awards, run by the Darwin City Council:

- Joanne Van Os (PALM)
- Lyndal Asanempoka (KATH)
- Leni Shilton (ASP)

### Wordstorm, the NT Writers' Festival in Darwin

The NT Writers' Festival, known as Wordstorm in Darwin, was held 5-8 May, 2016. The NT Writers' Festival traditionally has an annual theme, and in 2016 it was "The Fabric of Family". The festival included readings, special events, workshops, book launches, theatre and spoken word.

- The Festival Opening included readings from Marie Munkara, Mary Anne Butler, Tony Birch, Darwin poet Kathy Mills, Indonesian writer Eliza Vitri Handayani, and a performance by Melbourne singer/writer Valanga Khoza.
- Book launches were held for Mary Anne Butler (*Broken*, Currency Press), Marie Munkara (*Of Ashes and Rivers that Run to the Sea*, Penguin), Linda Wells (*Kultitja: Memoir of an Outback Schoolteacher*, Gininderra Press), Toni Tapp Coutts (*A Sunburnt Childhood*, Hachette), Kieran Finnane (*TROUBLE: On Trial in Central Australia*, UQP), and the anthology *Desert Writing: Stories from Country* (UWP).
- Individual author talks were held with Tony Birch (a free talk at Darwin library); Richard Glover (at a special mother's day brunch at the Treetops Restaurant); and Magda Szubanski (In conversation at the Christ Church Cathedral before a crowd of about 250).
- Theatre show, *The Package*, by Alice Springs' writer/performers Katelnd Griffin, Robbie Hoad and Kristie Schubert.
- Spoken word and open mic night "A Letter to My Family" with MC James Mangohig was a special evening, with guests Beth Yahp, Zohab Zee Khan and Valanga Khoza, followed by open mic from local writer/performers.
- Kim's Cubby: In a tribute to the late Darwin writer Kim Caraher, Diane Lucas again helped to co-ordinate readings by children's writers for the benefit of local children. The writers who took part were: Diane Lucas, Jacinda Brown, Sandra Kendell, Johanna Bell, Paul Seden, Sarah Body and Valanga Khoza.
- Author panels.
  1. Writing memoir: Magda Szubanski, Marie Munkara, Toni Tapp Coutts and Linda Wells.
  2. A focus on new Indonesian literature with Eka Kurniawan and Eliza Vitri Handayani.
  3. Family fractured with Kieran Finnane, David Hardy, Cathryn Tilmouth and Tony Birch.
  4. Graphic novels with Levin Diatschenko, Christine Black, Toni Griffin and Eleri Mae Harris.

5. The family recipe, with Toni Tapp Coutts, Beth Yahp, Christopher Raja and Eliza Vitri Handayani.
  6. The country that comes with family with Maureen O’Keefe, Irena Kobald, Leni Shilton and Ktima Heathcote.
  7. Depicting Family in YA Literature with Barry Jonsberg, Clare Atkins, Joanne van Os and Derek Pugh. Adaptation with Leisl Egan, Mary Anne Butler, Courtney Collins and Jane Hampson.
- The Great Comedy Debate: Are journalists the bastard children in the great literary family? For the journalists: Ashley Manicaros (NT News), Steven Schubert (ABC) and Katherine Gregory (ABC). For the writers: Mary Anne Butler, Laurie May and Zohab Khan. The writers won the debate in what was an hilarious evening of entertainment.

### Charles Darwin University – festival outreach

A number of festival authors gave seminars for students at Charles Darwin University, to honour a sponsorship agreement my predecessor made with the university. Many thanks also to Dr Sandra Thibodeaux for helping to organise it. The authors were:

- Eka Kurniawan from Indonesia
- Eliza Vitri Handayani from Indonesia
- Marie Munkara from Brisbane
- Tony Birch from Melbourne
- Kaye Aldenhoven from Darwin

### Territory Read Awards

The Territory Read Awards are held every two years. In 2016, the awards were open to books published in 2014 and 2015. Self-published books were only eligible if they’d been independently reviewed. The funding for the prize-money and some of the other costs was obtained from the NT Chief Minister, and the Copyright Cultural Fund.

This year there were two judges: novelist Jennifer Mills (who was in China at the time), and Peter Bishop, formerly of Varuna. They were each paid \$1000, and each showed a dedication and sensitivity to the craft of writing.

17 books were entered, by 16 authors, including a stage play, poetry, fiction, YA fiction, non-fiction, children’s and memoir:

- Nona and Me, by Clare Atkins
- Highway of Lost Hearts, by Mary Anne Butler
- Heavengrad by Levin Diatschenko
- The New Death by Levin Diatschenko
- Battlescars, by Charlene Ericson
- Dry Crossing by Russell Guy
- I am Darwin, by Tony Haritos



- Silly Sausage by Lauren Holmes
- Green Tree Frogs, by Sandra Kendell
- Bilby's Ring Trilogy, by Kaye Kessing
- My Two Blankets, by Irena Kobald
- The China Seas Crisis by Franz Kratschmer
- Being Martha's Friend, by Meg Mooney
- Tambora, by Derek Pugh
- The Burning Elephant by Christopher Raja
- Dirty H2O by Sandra Thibodeaux
- Ronan's Echo by Joanne van Os

The judges chose a shortlist of:

- Nona and Me, by Clare Atkins
- Highway of Lost Hearts, by Mary Anne Butler
- My Two Blankets, by Irena Kobald
- Being Martha's Friend, by Meg Mooney
- Tambora, by Derek Pugh
- The Burning Elephant by Christopher Raja

Three Alice Springs authors on the shortlist, Christopher Raja, Irena Kobald and Meg Mooney, were flown to Darwin to attend the ceremony, which was held at the NT Library in conjunction with the NT Literary Awards.

The NT Book of the year was shared this year between Mary Anne Butler, *Highway of Lost Hearts*, and Clare Atkins, *Nona and Me*.

The best non-fiction book went to *Tambora*, by Derek Pugh.

The best children's or YA book went to Irena Kobald for *My Two Blankets*.

### **Darwin Botanic Gardens House Residency**

The NT Writers Centre, in conjunction with the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens, began this Writer in Residence program in 2013. We have continued offering this residency to a NTWC member, this year for two weeks. The chosen writer was Leonie Norrington. As part of the residency she held two readings at two Gardens events, and the NTWC held a forum discussion about publishing children's literature with Leonie, which was well attended by members and non-members.

### **Inaugural Andrew McMillan Memorial Retreat in Larrimah**

The NTWC offered the first Andrew McMillan Memorial Retreat in 2016. In his will, Andrew left an amount of money to the NTWC "to establish an annual retreat for an emerging writer across genres". Although the NTWC is yet to actually receive this bequest from the executors of Andrew's estate, we decided to offer the first retreat in the form of two weeks at the Larrimah Hotel, where Andrew often went to write. We had a lot of enquiries about this retreat but only two applications. The writer chosen for the retreat was Darwin

journalist and writer Kylie Stevenson, who is working on an historical novel. She wrote an article about her experiences in Larrimah which was included in the NTWC annual journal.

### **Catalyst funding for a writers exchange with SE Asian festivals**

The NTWC was successful in gaining some Catalyst funding (Federal) to pay for SE Asian authors to come to the NT Writers' Festival, and for NT authors to go to SE Asian festivals, if invited.

In 2016, we used the funding to sponsor Alice Springs author Christopher Raja after he was invited to appear at the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival in Indonesia. Christopher appeared on two panels, was featured at a writers' dinner, and also gave a workshop. This was an excellent opportunity for Christopher to gain more recognition, both in Asia and in Australia, as the Ubud Festival is becoming a high-profile festival.

### **Wild Words**

Darwin poet Fred van't Sand hosted Wild Words for us in 2016 which has its first evening in February with special guest Dr Lee Francis, a First Nations poet from the US who was in Australia as a guest of FNAWN (The First National Australian Writers Network). Wild Words is an opportunity for people to perform spoken word poetry or prose. It began at Happy Yess, but was later moved to Sunday afternoon at the Railway Club, in the hopes of making it more accessible to people with family commitments. Wild Words is \$5 and free for performers. The MC is paid \$200 per month.

### **Poetry coffee**

Poetry coffee mornings are held in Darwin on the third Thursday of the Month at the Coconut Grove Café, Eat at Martins, and led by a long-time NTWC member Kaye Aldenhoven. It's a free event allowing people to read their own poetry or someone else's poetry and enable positive discussion. This is not a forum for critical analysis of people's work, but simply for enjoyment and encouragement.

### **Poetry Slam Championships**

The NTWC held the Darwin final of the National Poetry Slam Championships, and paid the flight costs for the two NT finalists (from Darwin and Alice finals) to go to Sydney to compete in the Australian final.

Alice Springs poet Laurie May hosted the Darwin final for the NTWC at the Railway Club, with a large audience in attendance (around 150). The Darwin winner was Stevie Kyriacou.

The Alice final is staged by a different group (Laurie May's Dirty Word), but the NTWC paid for the winner Tristram Watkins to fly to Sydney for the championships.

### **Hachette mentorship**

The NTWC offered a mentorship with Hachette editor Sophie Hamley for the second time in 2016. This time we had seven entries from six writers, and Sophie chose two people (Jacqueline Brady from Alice Springs and Melissa Rowe from Darwin) to mentor.

### Manuscript Assessments

In 2016 we quoted on three manuscript assessments, and completed one. Lynk Manuscript Assessment Services in Sydney handles our assessments, as they have well-established networks of assessors and editors across all genres, and can easily maintain anonymity of the assessors. We earn 10% commission/handling fee on each assessment. To date all authors have been happy with their assessments and inspired to complete the works based on feedback provided.

### Imprint magazine

In 2016, the NTWC relaunched a publication in the form of a 34-page journal for our members. This replaces the previous newsletter Write Turn, which had not been produced since 2014. It's intended this will be an annual journal, with a wrap-up of the year's events, advice for writers, and book reviews. Copies of Imprint went to all members, as well as all NT Libraries, our fellow writers' centres interstate, and to all the Territory MLAs (a print run of 300). So far feedback on the journal has been positive.

### Support and advice service

On average, the NTWC would receive at least one inquiry a week from a person wanting information on writing or how to get published. Once or twice a year we get an inquiry from someone who has been targeted by a publisher who is not being entirely honest with the writer. I wrote 20 letters of support for writers who were seeking to access funding or other programs.

### Other events support by the NTWC

The NTWC has continued its sponsorship arrangement with **the Northern Territory Library**, finding judges for the seven categories of **the NT Literary Awards**. The Library says a survey of entrants shows a large number of them find out about the awards through the NTWC.

The NTWC has continued its support of the **Darwin Poetry Cup** (with prizes and free membership for placegetters)

The NTWC paid for a number of Wordstorm artists to perform at **the Seabreeze Festival, Nightcliff**, on the spoken word stage.

**The Young Author Awards** (see workshops)

**The Red Dirt Poetry Festival** in Alice Springs. We supported this with a **Poetry High Tea**, featuring local poets.

We supported the **Unbroken Lands Festival** in Alice Springs, with the **Poems from Home** project, which saw the work of local poets printed on postcards and distributed during the festival. The poets were Michael Giacometti, Laurie May, Leni Shilton, Meg Mooney and Sue Fielding.

**The Capricornia Film Awards** (via prize sponsorship of short film category). We offered a prize for the best short film, which was won by Dylan Rivers from Alice Springs.

**Magabala Books** editor Rachel Christensen was in Darwin, and we helped get the word out to Indigenous writers. Six writers took the opportunity to meet Rachel at Frog Hollow, and she was very happy with this result.

### **Auspiced projects**

The NTWC auspiced a number of projects, which allows individuals and groups to access arts funding.

The Red Dirt Poetry Festival, and its director Laurie May.

Natalie Sprite's short story anthology.

### **NT Writers' Centre Board – 2016**

President - (to May 2016) Maria Scarlett

President - (from May 2016) Professor Martin Jarvis

Vice president – (to May 2016) Fred van't Sand

Vice president – (from May 2016) Adelle Sefton-Rowston

Regional vice president – Linda Wells

Treasurer – (from May) Dalton Dupuy

Treasurer (to February) Michael Haaren

Secretary and Public Officer – Michelle Coleman

Ordinary Member – David James

Ordinary Member (from May 2016) – Nicola Pitt

Ordinary Member (from May 2016) – Toni Tapp Coutts

Ordinary Member (from May 2016) – Ktima Heathcote

### **NT Writers' Centre Staff – 2016**

Executive Director – Sally Bothroyd

Alice Springs program manager – Fiona Dorrell

Festival program co-ordinator – Cora Diviny

Bookkeeper – Hamish McDonald

Casual workers – Ciella Williams, Sarah Hope

## Publications by NTWC members – 2016

Toni Tapp Coutts, *A Sunburnt Childhood*, published by Hachette

Mary Anne Butler, *Broken*, published by Currency Press

Kieran Finnane, *TROUBLE: On Trial in Central Australia*, published by UQP.

Johanna Bell (with illustrator Dion Beasley), *Go Home Cheeky Animals*, published by Allen & Unwin.

Derek Pugh, *Fort Dundas: The British in North Australia 1824-29*, self-published.

Lyndal Asanempoka, *The Road We All Took*, self-published.

Matt McKinlay, *Drug of Choice*, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

Ktima Heathcote, *The Cooper Chronicles - Featherfont*, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

David Curtis, Jim and Hawk, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

Adelle Sefton-Rowston, 'Scenes from the Top End: an interview with Mary Anne Butler' in *Sydney Review of Books*, 2 September 2016, and "Hope at the end of the world: creation stories and apocalypse in Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*" in *Antipodes Journal of Australian/New Zealand Literature*. Vol. 30, Issue 2, December 2016.

Adelle Sefton-Rowston, Kaye Aldenhoven, *Snap! POW! Palmerston Own Writers Anthology*.

KROW (Katherine Region Writers who include members Royelene Hill, Toni Tapp Coutts, and Jill Pettigrew as well as non NTWC members) published another short story anthology *Journeys, Jaunts and Jeopardy*.

## Other NT publications (non members) – 2016

Marie Munkara, *Of Ashes and Rivers that Run to the Sea*, published by Penguin

Paul Seden, *Crabbing With Dad*, published by Magabala Books.

Rosemary Plummer, *Tough and Rough*, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

John Hodgett, *Stom in a Ti Cup*, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

Adrian McNamara, *Rev*, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

Maureen O’Keefe, *The Trapper and the Insect Collector*, *Desert Writing: Stories from Country*, published by UWA.

## Achievements by NTWC members – 2016

**Mary Anne Butler** won the Victorian Premier’s Award for Literature (worth \$100,000!) and the Victorian Premier’s Award for Drama for her stage play *Broken*.

*Broken* was also produced by Darlinghurst Theatre in Sydney and had a return season by demand at the Darwin Festival, and was shortlisted for an AWGIE Award, and nominated for the Nick Enright Prize as part of the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards Awarded Sidney Myer fellowship.

**Mary Anne Butler** was also awarded a Sidney Myer fellowship, and a four-week residency at Bundanong in NSW.

**Sandra Thibodeaux’s** play *Age of Bones (Jaman Belulang)* was shortlisted for a Griffin Award, and toured in Indonesia.

**Christopher Raja** had a busy year with his first novel *The Burning Elephant* (published by Giramondo in 2015), having launches in Melbourne, China and Austria, as well as appearing at the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival in Indonesia.

**Michael Giacometti** was selected as the inaugural Regional Emerging Writer-in-Residence by the Newcastle Writers Festival, spending two weeks at The Lock-Up, and participating in the festival also. He received an Arts NT Quick Response grant to cover transport costs of attending the residency. He also received a Career Fund grant (\$1000) from Copyright Agency Limited to participate in the Write a Novel course presented by Faber Academy.

**Sandra Kendell’s** picture book *Green Tree Frogs* was named a “notable book” by The Children’s Book Council of Australia in the Eve Pownall Information section. *Green Tree Frogs* was also shortlisted in the picture book section for the REAL (reading and enjoying literature) awards in three states: the KROCs in the NT, YABBAs in Victoria and KOALAs in NSW.

**Joanne van Os** mentored 10 students at the Essington School in Darwin as they produced 10 picture books which the school published, and now has on sale.