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NT Writers' Centre

**2021**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**



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## ABOUT US

# OUR PURPOSE

*To bring people together to share story, language and culture and to support and celebrate Northern Territory writers and stories.*

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# OUR VISION

*Writing and storytelling are valued as vital parts of the Northern Territory's arts and cultural landscape. The region's diverse communities are proud of the stories that are shaped by this unique place, and are empowered to share their own.*

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# OUR VALUES

## **First Peoples First**

*We recognise Australia's First Peoples as the first storytellers and value their stories as a core component of Australia's cultural identity.*

## **Place**

*We value Northern Territory writing and storytelling and recognise the unique contribution they make to the nation's literary wealth.*

## **Diversity**

*We value the creativity and illumination that comes with diversity, and encourage writing and storytelling from people and places across Australia (and beyond).*

## **Inclusion**

*We create opportunities and remove barriers to allow more people to access literary activities.*

## **Relevance**

*We work to provide the best and most relevant activities and services for our members and sector.*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm honoured to be writing for the second year as President of the NT Writers' Centre Board, following on from two years as Vice President. It has been a busy and productive four years and I've loved the opportunity to be part of such a wonderful organisation. The NTWC supports our many different Territory writers; established, emerging, commercial, literary, and increasingly, of different genres, and offers exciting programs, and opportunities for writers in all fields.

The NTWC has also faced two incredibly difficult years due to COVID-19, and a huge thank you to Acting Executive Director, Fiona Dorrell, and her team, for their dedication, passion and skill during such tough times. The most difficult part of 2021 was the heartbreaking decision to cancel our NT Writers Festival, which was to be held in the beautiful Olive Pink gardens of Alice Springs. Festival Artistic Director Dani Powell and her team had created a powerful Festival program, based around the very relevant theme of

Anpernirrentye | Everything is connected. Congratulations to Dani and her team for still ensuring that some events could be recorded and enjoyed online. Thank you!

In 2022 Fiona and Festival Artistic Director, Rita Horanyi, are bringing the Festival back to lush Larrakia country from 23-26 June at the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin. The program theme Balarr | Catching the light is a perfect representation of what NTWC is seeking this year; setting out to encourage works that shine, enlighten, inspire, nourish the soul, and bring hope where it is needed most. Books take us to new worlds and new ways of thinking and remain as important as ever.

My sincere thanks to the Board for their hard work and support, and may 2022 be NTWC's best year yet!

**Tanya Heaslip**  
Board President  
NT Writers' Centre

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## TREASURER'S REPORT

The NT Writers' Centre incurred a deficit of \$9,629 for the year ended 31st December 2021, compared to a surplus of \$27,695 in 2020, the latter as a result of the Federal Government's COVID-19 related support (Cash Flow Boost and Jobkeeper). A minor surplus of \$860 had been budgeted and at the close of the year we had expected a surplus in the order of \$5,000 for the year but there were audit adjustments to reflect an increase in annual leave provisions, and other minor adjustments for expenses such as depreciation.

The major factor affecting the year's result was the cancellation of the organisation's flagship event, the NT Writers' Festival due to COVID-19 related public health regulations, with the attendant reduction in income from Box Office and Sponsorship. While the cancellation of the Festival did result in a reduction of Festival related direct costs, it nevertheless did not provide that income which supports the fixed operational costs incurred, resulting in the deficit for the year. The incurred operational costs included Festival wages, which in 2020 have been included in the Contractors & Consultants and Project Costs line item.

The cancellation of the Festival makes comparison of the year's result with that of the previous year (itself distorted by the receipt of the one-off Government support payments and the five month postponement of the 2020 Festival) less than useful, it is relevant to note that, if the 2020 unusual income is ignored, the Writers' Centre performed creditably in 2021 in comparison with other income holding up well and operational costs contained as well as could be expected given the Festival costs incurred without offsetting income.

The Balance Sheet shows net assets of \$177,617 and working capital of \$177,318, representing 33% of our annual budget, comfortably in excess of the 25% benchmark.

The NT Writers' Centre, then, is in a good financial position going into 2022 although there will be residual challenges from some continuing COVID related uncertainty.

**Brian Tucker**  
Board Treasurer  
NT Writers' Centre

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It was a privilege to Act as Executive Director of the NT Writers' Centre in 2021.

The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic proved just as challenging, if not more, than the first for the NT arts and culture sector. In August, the NT Writers Festival was devastatingly required to cancel just ten days from opening night due to local restrictions. Constantly changing public health advice across the preceding months disrupted project plans and timelines. It was an immensely challenging time for everyone involved.

Fortunately, due to an incredible push by staff and participating writers, some events and school sessions were able to go ahead and a number of sessions were moved online in the final hour. Increased in-house and audience familiarity with online platforms was essential to the viability of these last minute shifts. The result is that we are proud to report reasonably strong engagement figures, despite the overall constraints.

Thankfully, many of our regular year-round workshops, events, special projects and partnership initiatives went ahead uninterrupted or were able to be delivered online.

My huge thanks to the whole team for working tirelessly in the face of considerable uncertainty. Dani Powell took creative carriage of the Festival for the fourth time, and curated and planned another impressive, four-day program.

The organisation also welcomed the delightful, Tam Hanson, to the Alice Springs Program Officer role. In Darwin, Rita Horanyi continued her dedicated work across all NTWC programs and communications, as Program Manager, and Sandra Thibodeaux joined the team as Development Manager.

A special thanks to the participating writers who continued to show up with creativity, enthusiasm and flexibility at every step of the way.

To the NTWC's Board, thank you for your constant support and for steering the organisation's governance through these challenges. To our funders, supporters and partners - especially Arts NT and the Australia Council for the Arts - thank you for your flexibility and understanding in difficult circumstances.

Finally, thanks as ever to our members and audiences for your ongoing support, and particularly to those based in regional NT, who we recognise were especially impacted by the loss of the Festival program.

I look forward to staying connected with the many individuals who make up the NT Writers' Centre and to sharing more words and stories with you next year.

**Fiona Dorrell**

Acting Executive Director  
NT Writers' Centre

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# AT A GLANCE

*Since 1997 the NT Writers' Centre has encouraged vibrant literary activity in the Northern Territory. In 2021 the Festival was disappointingly forced to cancel due to COVID-19-related disruptions. Our year-round program ran with a mix of live and online events, workshops, special projects and partnership initiatives.*

# 225

MEMBERS

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# 34

PARTNERSHIPS

---

# \$393,259

ANNUAL REVENUE

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# 24

WORKSHOPS FOR WRITERS

---

# 56

WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

---

# 18

SESSIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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# 66

WRITERS & ARTISTS EMPLOYED

# 2,481

ATTENDANCES IN-PERSON &  
ONLINE



# NT Writers Festival

## Mparntwe Alice Springs

### 26-29 Aug 2021

*anpernirrentye* everything is connected

The 2021 NT Writers Festival theme Anpernirrentye | Everything is connected drew from the Arrernte relationship system, which describes the way in which everything is connected to everything else – people, animals, land, language and culture. In a year of lockdowns, isolation, and separation from loved ones, the theme offered a reminder of our resilience through reciprocity.

Programmed to take place from 26-29 August 2021 in Alice Springs, this year's program was heartbreakingly required to cancel just ten days from opening night due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

Constant changes to restrictions across the country over the preceding months had impacted all aspects of planning & programming. It was a difficult time for everyone involved.

Despite the cancellation, an incredible final push by staff allowed a selection of events to go ahead, some events to move online, and several school sessions to be delivered with local artists.

## AT A GLANCE

**EVENTS: 6 / 36**  
**ONLINE EVENTS: 6 / 0**  
**HYBRID EVENTS: 1 / 0**  
**WORKSHOPS: 1 / 7**  
**SCHOOL SESSIONS: 14 / 20**  
**WRITERS & ARTISTS**  
**EMPLOYED: 23 / 75**  
**ATTENDANCES:**  
**1,149 / 2,500**  
**ONLINE ATTENDANCES:**  
**647 / 0**

\*delivered / planned

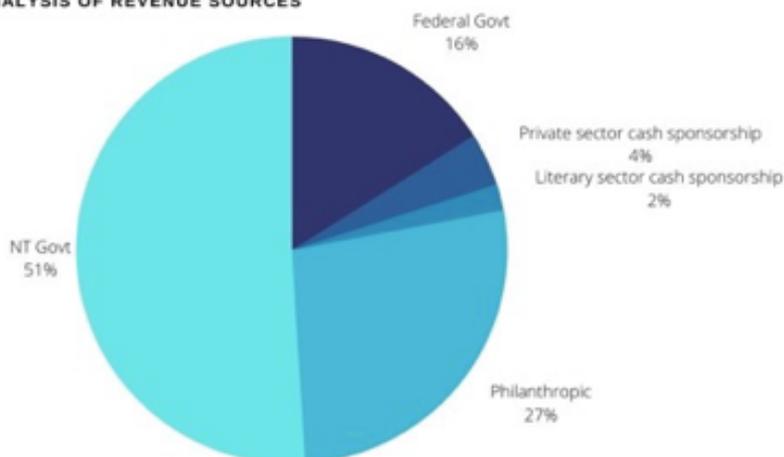
We are proud to report the following achievements.

- The development, launch and distribution of a thought-provoking and celebratory four-day program.
- Engagement of seventy-five writers and artists from the NT and interstate.
- Partnership and sponsorship from twenty organisations and businesses.
- Planning of thirty-six events and seven writer workshops.
- Successful delivery of a reduced program of local events.
- Strong local school's sessions engaging 400+ students.
- Delivery of six online sessions at short notice with artists from across Australia, attracting 600+ views.
- Increased organisational knowledge about delivery of online and hybrid programs.
- Strong engagement figures despite the overall constraints.

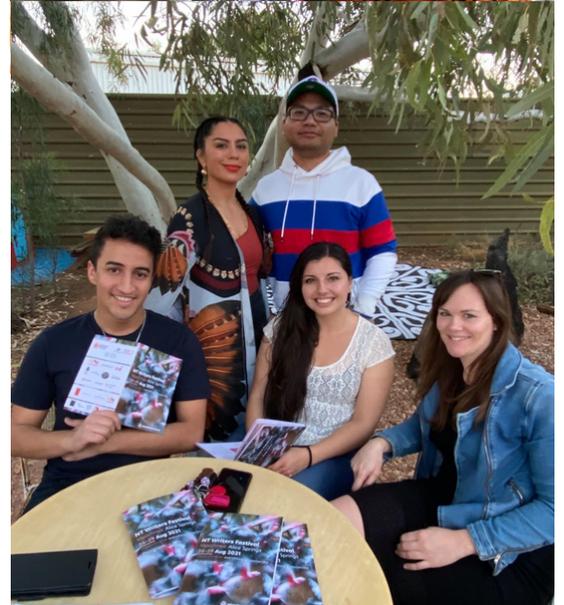
## FUNDING SPONSORSHIP & PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION

Flexibility and support from government and non-government funders was critical to our ability to weather the financial impact of cancellation.

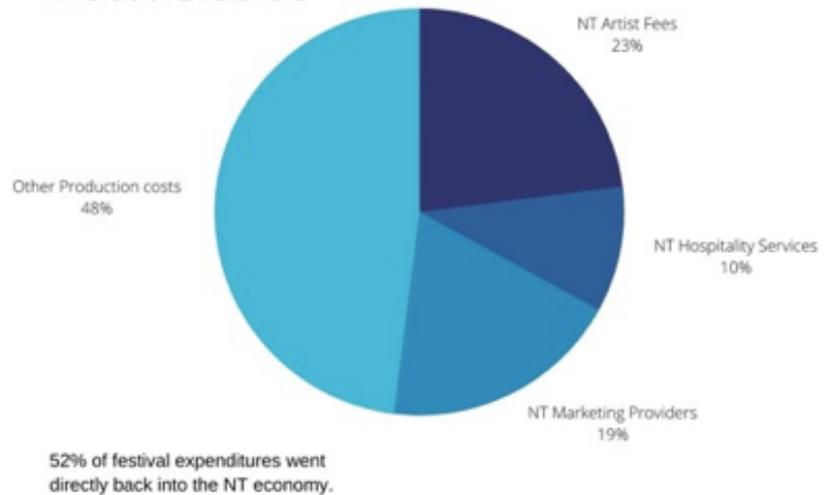
NTWF 2021  
ANALYSIS OF REVENUE SOURCES



33% of festival revenue came from non-government sources.



NTWF 2021  
ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE



Cancellation had a significant impact on expected revenue, especially on sponsorship and box office.

Some 55% of expected costs were expended and/or unable to be recouped and an estimated \$61,000 in box office and pledged cash and in-kind sponsorship was lost.

Despite the challenges, 52% of festival expenditures went directly back into the NT economy, with 23% spent on hiring NT artists, and 29% spent with NT businesses.

Estimated loss included:

- \$22,000 estimated box office
- \$7,500 returned cash sponsorship
- \$20,000 pledged literary sector cash sponsorship
- \$11,500 other pledged in-kind sponsorship

Despite difficult losses, sound financial management across all operations resulted in a minor budgetary deficit overall.



NTWF  
Online  
Sessions



## DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Each year, as part of the organisation's objective to support and showcase NT writers, and to foster an appreciation of reading, writing and storytelling, the NT Writers' Centre delivers and supports a variety of writing workshops, partnership initiatives, and special projects. While several planned activities were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, the majority were able to go ahead.

### WRITING WORKSHOPS

In 2021 NTWC delivered fourteen writing workshops and opportunities designed to assist writers in developing their craft, six of which took place online. NTWC recorded 207 workshop attendances across 56 hours of tuition.

70% of survey participants joined a writing

workshop to improve their writing skills. 85% of survey participants said their course met their expectations. 77% strongly agreed that their facilitator was effective and engaging.

A number of survey participants have requested more support for commercial, genre and self-published authors. NTWC values member feedback and is actively seeking new opportunities in these areas.

### GRAPHIC NOVEL CLUB

Proudly supported by the City of Darwin, the Graphic Novel Club included a series of eight youth workshops with First Nations Graphic Novelist, Jonathan Saunders, that took place at Casuarina and Darwin City Library across October and November.

The workshops attracted 6-16 young people aged 12-17 and with an interest in telling stories through words and pictures to each session.

Participants learnt storyboarding, sketching characters, and working with pencil, ink and ipads to produce their very own short graphic novels.

## AT A GLANCE

WORKSHOPS: 14 / 20

HOURS OF TUITION: 56

EVENTS: 17

YOUTH SESSIONS: 14

ONLINE SESSIONS: 6

ATTENDANCES: 783

SPECIAL PROJECTS: 3

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES: 5

WRITERS & ARTISTS

EMPLOYED: 34



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## **BROTHER MOON DIGITAL ADAPTATION**

Proudly supported by an Arts NT Digital Adaptation grant, NTWC produced an exciting digital adaptation of *Brother Moon* by Maree McCarthy Yoelu and Samantha Fry. This atmospheric children's tale was brought to life through animation by NT artist Effy Smith, and original music by composer Netanela Mizrahi.

The composition premiered at two special children's musical storytelling events at the NT Library. The author and illustrator conducted readings and children's activities and Tara Murphy, Education Officer and Concertmaster at Darwin Symphony Orchestra, conducted musical activities. Upwards of eighty children attended the sessions.

The animation was launched at NTWC's Darwin end-of-year celebration and is now freely available as a resource to teachers and parents via Youtube.



## **NTWF WRITING RESIDENCY**

In 2021 NTWC was delighted to announce a brand new NTWF Writing Residency, made possible through the generous support of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal.

This opportunity offered two writers residing in Alice Springs a two-week residency to devote themselves to a writing project of their choice.

Designed to allow writers to make use of the inspiration that the rich intellectual atmosphere of the festival can spark, the residency was taken up within three months of the festival program release.

Two writers, Gabe Curtin, and Lisa Stefanoff were awarded the opportunity.

Dr Lisa Stefanoff is an Alice Springs-based writer, social researcher, media/arts producer, mother of two young children and curator with a PhD in cultural anthropology who has written from inside and outside of academia for the past twenty-five years. She works close to the



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ground, from within collaborations, and experimentally to explore new ways of storying precarity, ecology, crisis, resistance, radical hope and survival.

Of her residency, Dr Stefanoff said:  
*My residency was totally wonderful. Taking space away from my high energy kids and busy regular schedule to write was golden. Thank you so much for this incredible opportunity. I was able to develop this essay from sketch to publication: <https://arena.org.au/relational-medicine/>*

The second writer awarded the opportunity was Gabriel Curtin, an artist, writer and editor interested in poetry's ability to locate relations unencumbered by policy. He has published work in *Un Magazine*, *Infrastructural Inequalities*, *Borderlands*, *Art + Australia Online* among others. His novella *Forced Rhubarb* was published in 2018.

Gabe Curtin said: *It was extremely useful to carve out a period of time away from my usual working and weekly obligations in order to focus intently on my writing. I made a huge amount of headway on the particular project I worked on and have carried the momentum and routine I established during the residency forward.*

## **SELECT PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

### **WILD WORDS**

In 2021, long-standing artist run initiative, Wild Words, took place at Lucky Bat café, Nightcliff on the last Sunday of the month and offered writers in Darwin the chance to perform spoken word, poetry and prose in front of a supportive audience. Led primarily by writer, Shaun Green, NTWC supported Wild Words in the form of MC fees and in-kind promotion, including social media.

### **ARTIST RUN INITIATIVE IN RESIDENCE | RUNNING WATER COMMUNITY PRESS**

Proudly supported by Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund - An Australian Government initiative, the ARI in Residence was an initiative designed to support and develop critical publishing infrastructure in the NT in order to allow more NT stories – and especially those from regional and remote areas - to appear in the national literary landscape.

Running Water Community Press is a not-for-profit community-controlled publisher run by authors who are local to Alice Springs. It is the only independent publisher based in the Northern Territory and, to date, has been entirely volunteer-run, publishing titles through a combination of project-specific grants and funneling

revenue from book sales back into publishing expenses. The press was first established as a community writers group and operated under the name of Ptilotus Press from 1996 until 2021. In 2018 they obtained a multiyear distribution deal through NewSouth Books which sees RWCP titles distributed to over a hundred booksellers across Australia and New Zealand, as well as at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

The five-month residency commenced in November 2021 and supported RWCP to renew their distribution deal, establish industry mentors, develop new income generating strategies and make steps towards publication of new titles.

## **NT LITERARY AWARDS | LIBRARY & ARCHIVES NT**

The NT Literary Awards is the premier prize for unpublished, short form writing by NT authors.

The NTWC continued its sponsorship arrangement with Library & Archives NT, sourcing judges for all categories of the NT Literary Awards, providing prizes to winners, in particular the NT Writers' Centre Poetry Award, and promoting the competition to our membership.

## **ARTS NT VARUNA FELLOWSHIP**

Arts NT again offered six virtual and three in-person fellowships in partnership with Varuna National Writers' House. NTWC partnered on this initiative by assisting in the assessment process and by facilitating online discussion groups for virtual fellows. The application process was competitive, eliciting a wide range of exciting new NT works in development.

## **YOUNG TERRITORY AUTHOR AWARDS | CITY OF DARWIN LIBRARIES**

NTWC arranged youth workshops in partnership with regional libraries for young writers. Emerging graphic novelist Declan Miller ran a session at the Alice Springs Public Library, established author, Leonie Norrington visited Taminmin Library in Batchelor to work with students from Taminmin High School, and an online session with CBCA Children's Laureate, Phil Kettle took place through Palmerston Library.

Each year, these awards support and recognise the NT's freshest upcoming voices.



## MEMBER SERVICES

### IMPRINT MAGAZINE

The sixth edition of *Imprint* was released to members and friends of the centre in December 2021. Each year *Imprint* includes a selection of opportunities, industry advice, local book reviews and articles and interviews by and about NT writers.

### SUPPORT & ADVICE

The NTWC offers advice to members and other NT writers.

In 2021, the NTWC recorded twenty-one separate inquiries from writers of children's, history, screenplays, playscripts and more, seeking advice about self-publishing, funding, writers groups, and more. Many more calls went unrecorded.

In 2021, the NTWC offered fourteen letters of support for writers seeking grants for writing projects.

**imprint**  
Northern Territory Writers' Centre Journal | December 2021



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## OUR PEOPLE

### OUR BOARD

President: Tanya Heaslip

Vice President: Dina Davis

Regional Vice President: Renee McBryde

Secretary: *Vacant*

Treasurer: Brian Tucker

Public Officer: Shona Ford

Ordinary Members:

Michelle Bates

Joanna Henryks

Fred van't Sand

### OUR STAFF

Acting Executive Director: Fiona Dorrell

Festival Artistic Director: Dani Powell

Program Manager: Rita Horanyi

Development Manager: Sandra Thibodeaux

Program Officer: Tam Hanson

Festival Technical Manager: Matt Woodham

Bookkeeper: Fiona Carter



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## OUR PARTNERS

**A huge thank you to our funders,  
partners, supporters, and sponsors.  
Your contribution makes our work  
possible.**

Northern Territory Government | ArtsNT

Australian Government | Australia  
Council for the Arts

Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand  
(RISE) Fund - An Australian Government  
initiative

NT Major Events Company

Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal

City of Darwin

City of Darwin Libraries

Alice Springs Public Library

Library & Archives NT

Palmerston Library

Taminmin Library

Olive Pink Botanic Garden

AirNorth

Alice Springs Airport

Top End Tourism

Yeperenye Shopping Centre

Red Kangaroo Books

The Bookshop Darwin

Colemans

Wild Words

Darwin Symphony Orchestra

Varuna The National Writers' House

Running Water Community Press

Children's Book Council of Australia NT  
Branch

8CCC

First Nations Australia Writers Network

Australian Poetry

Griffith Review

Allen & Unwin

Black Inc

Magabala Books

The Red Room Company

Goodreading Magazine

Off The Leash

Australian Poetry Slam

