



Northern Territory  
Writers' Centre



# Northern Territory Writers Festival

Strategic Plan 2020-23

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Northern Territory Writers' Centre acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, meet and live across the Northern Territory. We recognise Australia's First Nations people as the first and rightful story tellers and keepers of knowledge of our land and pay our respects to elders – past, present and emerging

## CONTENTS

### PAGE

2.	CONTENTS
3.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
4.	INTRODUCTION
5.	DESCRIPTION
8.	ORGINISATIONAL MODEL
9.	MISSION, VISION, VALUES
10.	VISION
11.	STRATEGIC GOALS and OBJECTIVES
20.	TARGET AUDIENCE
23.	SITUATIONAL CONTEXT
27.	SWOT ANALYSIS
32.	EVENT BARRIERS
33.	EVENT UNIQUENESS
36.	FINANCIAL
38.	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFIT
39.	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
42.	OPERATIONAL PLANS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the next four years the NT Writers Festival will become a vibrant, sustainable festival with a strong national reputation and growing audiences. It will be a festival like no other.

The festival will evolve, in reputation and stature, responsibly and with integrity. It will maintain its community roots but look to the future, building reputation, audiences and impact.

It will establish a strong brand as the **NT Writers Festival**. With a fixed date in the national and NT events calendar, it will be programmed annually and held alternately in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Over the next four years the NT Writers Festival will become recognised as **a new kind of writers festival shaped by place**. It will build on solid foundations, investing in resources for programming, marketing and development.

The festival will **bring people together to share story, language and culture**. It will program a vibrant festival, that reaches beyond the traditional writers festival model, where 'place is presenced' and in which the values 'respect, accessibility, illumination, creativity and diversity' are embedded in all we do. It will ensure a festival experience that is second to none.

The program will include locals and welcome those from afar. It will unearth new talent, it will feature them alongside established writers and bring new readers and audiences to their work. Equally the festival will welcome writers from across the nation and the globe. Side by side, sharing thoughts and experiences, the local community will be exposed to new voices and ideas, while visitors will be immersed in a rich NT experience.

The NT Writers Festival will, over the next four years, develop a reputation as a national leader in amplifying Australian First Nations voices, as well as linguistic and cultural diversity. It will afford all local individuals and communities the opportunity to share their stories.

The festival audiences will grow sustainably over the next four years. It will build local audiences and broaden the demographics, attracting more young people, and First Nations audiences. It will actively attract intra-territory and interstate visitors providing them with a unique cultural experience.

# INTRODUCTION TO THIS DOCUMENT

*'An effective strategic plan articulates not only where an organisation is going and the actions needed to make progress, but also how it will measure its success.'*

## NT Major Events.

As a community event, Northern Territory Writers' Centre (NT Writers' Centre) received funding from Northern Territory Major Events to develop a strategic plan for the next four years of the Northern Territory Writers Festival (NT Writers Festival). Through this strategic plan the NT Writers' Centre will build a stronger, more professionally-delivered festival with greater potential for future growth and sustainability.

The aim of this strategic plan is to devise a compelling and collaborative vision and the framework to build a vibrant and sustainable annual Northern Territory Writers Festival.

The organisation recognises the value of this Strategic Plan is to:

- ***Establish a legacy document for transforming the NT Writers Festival.***
- Inspire dreams rather than dictate paths
- Facilitate a plan for growth, and articulate goals, strategies and targets clearly
- Ensure sustainability and longevity for the event
- Develop pathways to establish a stable long-term mix of funding and income generation
- Build partnerships in the community and nationally
- Increase membership of, and engagement with, NT Writers' Centre
- Increase festival audiences both from interstate, intra-territory and locally
- Capture corporate knowledge
- Ensure best practice planning, site logistics and risk management.

This funding allowed NT Writers Festival to contract an event professional to guide the development of a bespoke strategic plan.

The project plan and methodology was approved by NT Writers' Centre and NT Major Events. The strategic plan was developed by key staff and representatives of NT Writers' Centre Board.

This document will sit under the Northern Territory Writers' Centre Strategic Plan.

## DESCRIPTION

A not-for-profit incorporated organisation, Northern Territory Writers' Centre is a membership organisation with 177 financial members in July 2019. It is overseen by a Board of Management which appoints an Executive Director.

The Northern Territory Writers' Centre encourages vibrant literary activity in the Northern Territory, developing and supporting writers in all genres at all stages of their careers. It values quality NT writing as a unique component of Australia's literary wealth and recognises Australian First Nations writers and storytellers as a core component of this.

As well as ongoing member services, the Northern Territory Writers' Centre offers a year-round program of workshops, writer development opportunities and showcase events across the NT, including the NT Writers Festival.

Since 1999 the NT Writers Festival has been the organisation's annual cornerstone event. Over the years it has shifted location from Darwin to Alice Springs and Katherine. Since 2012 it has been delivered biennially at Darwin and Alice Springs. The premier showcase of literary culture within the Northern Territory, it promotes local writers and presents visiting writers from across Australia.

The festival aims to bring writers and readers together in an annual celebration of ideas and words, stories and languages. Over the years, the festival has provided a platform which includes panels, conversations, workshops and performances. It includes fiction, non-fiction, poetry and oral traditions, writing for screen, stage and song. Set mainly in outdoor locations, the festival celebrates a strong sense of place and community. Over the past two decades, it has reached a generation of readers and writers.

Whilst celebrated as an intimate, community event within the NT, it has a strong recognition in the literary sector. The NT Writers Festival is recognised as an important part of a national network of major writers festivals in each capital city in Australia.

Importantly, the festival is built on a year-round series of outreach projects and skills development. This unearths new talent, provides skill development opportunities and engages with remote communities, who are then showcased at the festival. This work allows the festival to shine a light on the languages, stories and storytellers of the Northern Territory including Australian First Nations peoples.

## Northern Territory Writers Festival background

- 1997** Northern Territory Writers' Centre was registered as an incorporated association
- 1999** NT Writers' Week (presented by the NT Writers' Centre in association with the Festival of Darwin), Darwin Sept 9-16
- 2000** NT Writers' Weekend, Darwin August 3-6
- 2001** NT Writers' Week (possibly part of Fringe Festival), Darwin Aug 2-11
- 2002** Top End Writers' Festival, MAGNT lawns, Darwin Sep 5-12
- 2004** Wordstorm: Northern Territory Writers' Festival, MAGNT, Darwin May 28-30
- 2005** Wordstorm: Northern Territory Writers' Festival, MAGNT, Darwin June 16-19
- 2006** Wordstorm: Northern Territory Writers' Festival, MAGNT, Darwin May 18-21
- 2007** Eye of the Storm, Katherine May 25-26
- 2008** Wordstorm: Northern Territory Writers' Festival, MAGNT, Darwin May 14-18
- 2009** Eye of the Storm: Alice Springs Writers' Festival, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, Alice Springs May 1-4
- 2010** Wordstorm: The Festival of Australasian Writing, Botanic Gardens, Darwin May 12-16
- 2011** Words on the Fringe: Writers Festival, Katherine June 25-26
- 2012** Wordstorm & the National Poetry Festival, Browns' Mart and Civic Park, Darwin May 10-13
- 2013** Eye of the Storm: Festival of New Australian Writing, Culture and Ideas, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, Alice Springs April 25-28
- 2014** Wordstorm: Top End Writers' Festival Browns' Mart and Townhall Ruins, Darwin May 29-June 1
- 2015** Eye of the Storm Writers' Festival, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, Alice Springs Sep 17-20
- 2016** Wordstorm: NT Writers' Festival, Browns' Mart, Darwin May 5-8.
- 2017** NT Writers' Festival, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, Alice Springs May 18-21
- 2018** Wordstorm: NT Writers' Festival, Brown's Mart, Darwin May 24-27
- 2019** NT Writers' Festival, Olive Pink Botanic Gardens, Alice Springs May 18-21

# Management Structure

## Northern Territory Writers' Centre board

**President: Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston (Darwin)** Adelle Sefton-Rowston has a PhD in literary studies and lectures at Charles Darwin University. She has published numerous essays, reviews, poetry and prose. Adelle's forthcoming book is being published with Peter Lang and explores contemporary literature and representations of race relations in Australia.

**Vice President: Christian Bok (Darwin)** Christian Bok is an experimental poet, originally from Canada, and a lecturer for Literary Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities at Charles Darwin University.

**Regional Vice President: Tanya Heaslip (Alice Springs)** Tanya Heaslip was raised in Central Australia through the 1960s and 70s, has practised law for many years throughout Australia, and has now returned to live in Alice. In May 2019, she published her memoir 'Alice to Prague' (AU) and is currently working on her second memoir. She is an AICD Graduate.

**Secretary: Varunika Ruwanpura (Darwin)** Varunika Ruwanpura has a Master of Philosophy in Journalism. She is a journalist, writer, researcher and arts professional. Her published children's books are: Exotic Animal Carers, This is my brother and Breakfast in the Jungle. She works for the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art in Darwin.

**Treasurer: Bronwyn Druce (Alice Springs)** Bronwyn is the manager of Alice Springs independent bookseller Red Kangaroo Books.

**Public Officer: Shona Ford (Darwin)** Shona Ford is a school teacher with a love of creative writing. She's a past winner of an NT Literary Award, and has encouraged many of her students to also enter the Youth category of the Awards.

**Ordinary Member: Maureen O'Keefe (Alice Springs)** Maureen Jipyiliya Nampijimpa O'Keefe is a Kaytetye-Warlpiri woman born and raised in Ali-Curung, south-east of Tennant Creek. Her poems and short stories have appeared in print and online. In 2014 she was the recipient of the Magabala Books Australian Indigenous Creators' Scholarship and she has performed at Writers' Festivals across the country.

**Ordinary Member: Fred van't Sand (Darwin)** Fred van't Sand is a performance poet with a long affiliation with the NT Writers' Centre.

**Ordinary Member: Dina Davis (Darwin)** Dina Davis is an Australian woman writer. She holds an MA in English and Linguistics. Dina is a member of the NT Writers' Centre, Writing NSW, and the Australian Society of Authors. Dina has twice been shortlisted in the NT Literary Awards. In 2018 she published her debut work of fiction, 'Capriccio: A Novel', which was launched in Darwin. Dina's interests include literature, history, and all aspects of human rights.

### Northern Territory Writers' Centre staff

Executive Director and Director of NT Writers Festival – Darwin: Sally Bothroyd (FT)

Program Manager – Alice Springs: Fiona Dorrell (.6 FTE)

Festival Director NT Writers Festival – Alice Springs: Dani Powell (contracted biennially)

Festival Manager NT Writers Festival – Alice Springs: Rita Horanyi (contracted for 2019)

Bookkeeper – Darwin: Hamish McDonald (.2 FTE)

Administrator – Darwin: Kingsley Gittens (.4 FTE)

## Current organisational model



NT Writers Festival  
Alice Springs  
Promoting literary culture  
Promoting NT writers  
Pathways to publication  
Audience development



Northern Territory Writers'  
Centre  
Literary Hub  
Year round events,  
workshops, networks, talent  
identification and annual  
writers festival



NT Writers Festival Darwin  
Promoting literary culture  
Promoting NT writers  
Pathways to publication  
Audience development



## Possible model for the future



NT Writers  
development program



Northern Territory  
Writers Festival  
Alternately in Darwin  
and Alice Springs  
Year round events,  
workshops, networks,  
talent identification



NT Writers  
Year round events



# Northern Territory Writers Festival

## Strategic Plan 2020-23



## VALUES MATRIX

THESE VALUES APPLY TO EVERYTHING WE DO

### EXTERNAL

OUR FIRST PEOPLE, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR WRITERS,  
OUR PARTNERS, OUR AUDIENCES, OUR ENVIRONMENT

### INTERNAL

OUR PEOPLE, OUR PROGRAM,  
OUR ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

## VISION

Bringing people together to share story, language and culture, our vision is to **develop a new kind of writers festival shaped by place**, that speaks to and from the heart of Australia and the Northern Territory.

The festival will be ambitious and bold. The program will be vibrant and exciting. Over the next four years it will become a highly respected event in both the Northern Territory and the national literary landscape.

The festival will be clearly branded as the NT Writers Festival, with a date cemented into the NT festivals and the Australian literary calendars.

The festival, whilst annual, will be held alternately in Darwin and Alice Springs. With 1500 kilometers between locations, the festival will shift from the tropics to the desert, from coastal to inland, from Larrakia to Arrernte country, creating a character which reflects the diversity – environmental, cultural and social – of the Northern Territory itself.

Over the next four years, the NT Writers Festival will become recognised as a hub for all readers and writers, for those interested in ideas and culture, in stories and language. It will provide a festival experience that is unique and which attracts audiences from near and far. The festival will grow to become the 'must-attend' literary event in Australia.

Australian writers and publishers will recognise the festival as a great place to showcase, and to be exposed to, talent. Our local audiences will increase as we attract more people, in particular more young people, men and First Nations people. Equally, over the next four years increasing numbers of audiences from across the Northern Territory and from interstate will be attracted to the festival.

The NT Writers Festival will over the next four years develop a reputation as a national leader in amplifying Australian First Nations voices, as well as the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists across the country, shining a light on and celebrating an inclusive Australian narrative. It will open a conversation that cannot be had elsewhere.

The NT Writers Festival will celebrate the communities, landscape and environment of this spectacular region and its people. It will follow the tracks and veins, the songlines and whispering of Australian stories, be they ancient, those of our recent past, or of today.

*'The perfect small festival...exactly the right atmosphere to explore big and complex ideas in the company of generous minds. All in a location reminding us that stories are the foundation of every civilisation.'* Morris Gleitzman

# STRATEGIC GOALS and OBJECTIVES

## GOAL 1. VIBRANT PROGRAMMING

### STRATEGIES

- 1) Create a relevant, innovative, vibrant and thought-provoking program each year, ensuring reciprocity between the two destinations by creating shared artistic vision

### ACTIONS

- Develop a Festival Director model that sustains and enhances programming of an annual event
- Implement realistic timelines and year-round communications to attract key talent and set clear curatorial guidelines for the festival
- Embed a commitment to (and quotas for) the representation and celebration of Australian First Nations voices and languages, building a platform of development work throughout the year
- Partner with cultural organisations, projects and festivals in remote NT to showcase the best of the NT
- Partner with a key festival (Sydney Writers Festival and Auckland Writers Festival due to May timing) to share international writers and add value to their Australian experience
- Develop innovative presentation models including streaming/recording or pod casting to reach remote audiences
- Provide opportunities for festival Director/s to attend other festivals and meet with publishers and engage with the sector
- Ensure a program that is shaped by place and reflects the environment.

- 2) **Develop a strategy for author care to enhance both local and visiting authors' experience and to further attract talent**

**ACTIONS:**

- Appoint a volunteer ambassador for each visiting author
- Provide complementary experiences and opportunities for a richer NT experience while visiting
- Establish onsite facilities for writers including green room.

- 3) **Build an exciting schools and youth program both during and outside of the festival program**

**ACTIONS:**

- Expand on the program of visiting authors for school visits for primary and secondary students
- Partner with Charles Darwin University to develop student ticketing model
- Engage with publishers and ILF to develop these programs further
- Seek sponsor, foundation or 'giving program' support for schools' program
- Establish at least one free youth program to engage younger audiences.

## GOAL 2. SPREAD THE WORD

### STRATEGIES

#### 1) Create a consistent festival branding for one NT Writers Festival

##### ACTIONS:

- Develop a year-round, consistent brand for the festival across each site
- Establish a firm date that works for NT events and national literary events.

#### 2) Develop an effective marketing strategy to grow local, intra-territory and interstate audiences and employ adequate recourses to action the plan

##### ACTIONS:

- Employ a single marketing manager to develop a holistic marketing strategy that sits across both sites
- Seek funding to support these personnel and enact the marketing plan
- Build on a key partnership with ABC Radio National and establish one national print media such as The Guardian Australia
- Develop a strong partnership with local media to print and distribute the program and run advertorial
- Establish strong partnerships with the network of national festivals to promote to shared audiences
- Develop partnerships and communications strategy to build Australian First Nations audiences both locally and from remote communities
- Develop effective social media strategies, metrics and measurement tools.

### 3) Enhance the visitor experience

#### ACTIONS:

- Promote shared cultural experiences that enhance audience experience including NT Arts Trail and tourism such as Larapinta walks and visits to Uluru
- Develop cultural partnerships with other organisations e.g. Tjanpi Desert Weavers and Hermannsburg Potters, Australian First Nations cultural tours and promote as packages or ticketed event
- Give consideration to site layout to ensure access for those with physical, linguistic, social or economic constraints including sign language sessions
- Design and implement evaluation strategies to collect data which will allow the festival to respond to visitor feedback
- Improve ticketing options for audiences including more easily purchased tickets such as full day or multi-day passes, and early bird tickets
- Develop on-site atmosphere and comfort.



*Intimate, cosy, intelligent but without any pomposity, this is just the right festival for those who believe in reading, writing and talking about books for pleasure.*  
Mayank (Soofi) Singh, The Delhi Walla.

## GOAL 3. SOUND AND RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

### STRATEGIES

- 1) **Develop a new sustainable festival model for human resources, building on the existing talent and capacity**

### ACTIONS:

- Create year-round scheduling to enhance festival organisation and maintain continuity
- Establish an effective staffing model and allocate resources dedicated to a year-round Festival Director in both Alice and Darwin
- Allocate resources to a development role, to increase income streams and funding through marketing and publicity as well as philanthropy and sponsorship
- Harness the skills and experiences of the Board to build partnerships and raise income streams
- Audit and galvanise the skills and support of the Alice Springs Advisory Group and establish a Darwin Advisory Group to take on key roles both before and during the festival (as subcommittees of the Board)
- Expand and develop an effective volunteering program

- 2) **Invest in and implement effective income generation strategies**

### ACTIONS:

- Decrease dependence on government funding and grants
- Increase income generation from ticketing to 25% of the budget
- Success in the application for Australia Council multi-year funding 2021-24
- Establish a sponsorship program to seek and secure targeted sponsorship including a major sponsor for the festival as a whole and one location specific sponsor for each Alice and Darwin

- Set up a giving program and target philanthropic foundations for support for Australian First Nations writers, audiences and programs
- Seek and secure a grant from NT Events in 2020 to implement a marketing strategy
- Centralise resources for both festivals to avoid duplication and ensure efficiencies.

### 3) Develop operational planning and management strategies

#### ACTIONS:

- Appoint an Operations/Site/Production Manager that is in charge of all site operations, risk assessments, emergency planning and coordination
- Develop effective risk management plans including a NTWF Emergency Management Plan
- Develop clear roles, responsibilities and delegation to ensure safe delivery of the event across all venues
- Establish a consistent home for the Darwin festival in 2020 and an MOU with Olive Pink Botanic Garden.



## GOAL 4. LEADING THE WAY IN THE NT AND NATIONALLY

### STRATEGIES

- 1) **Be firmly established as a key event on the NT and national literary arts calendar**

### ACTIONS:

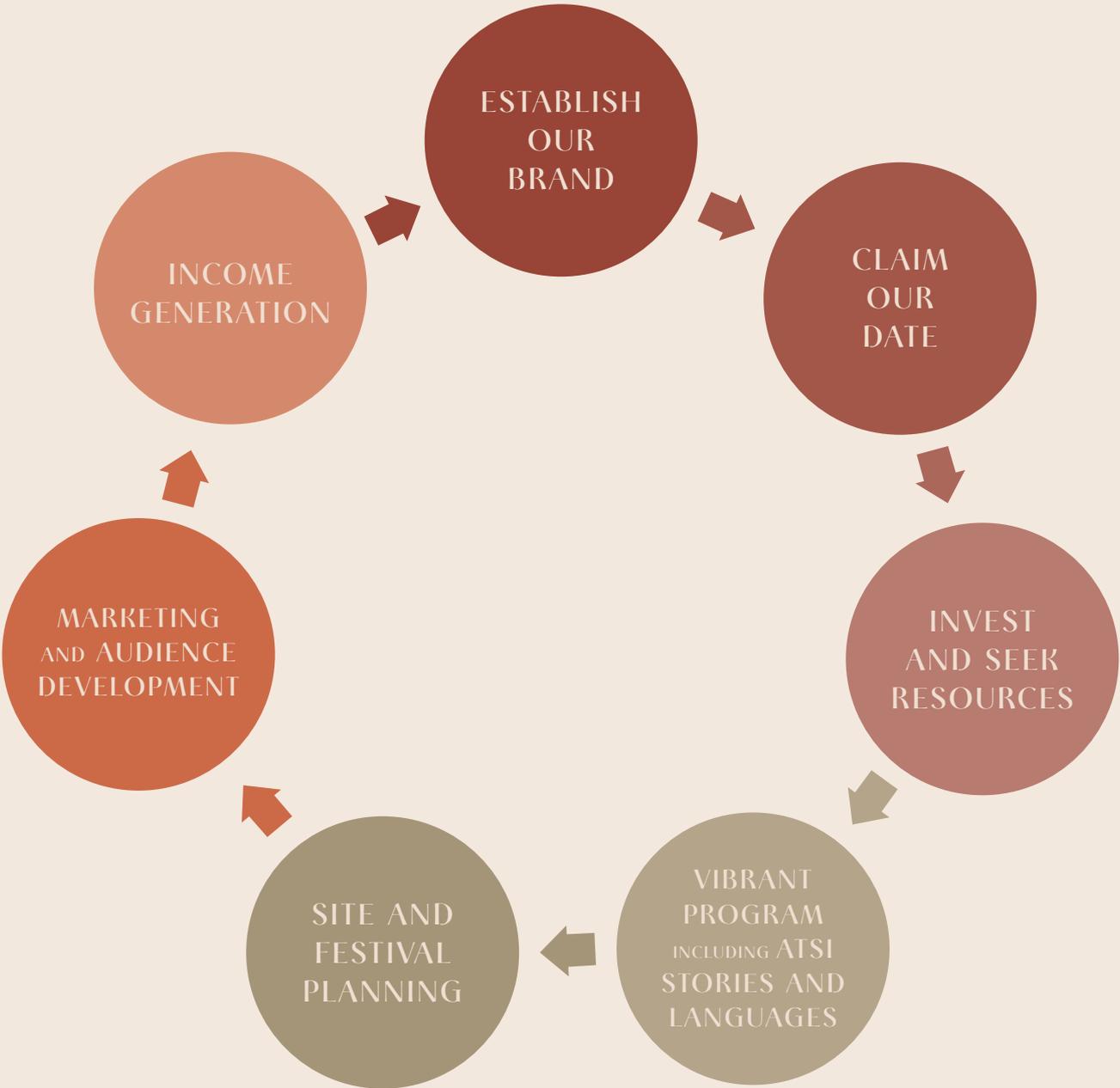
- Research, negotiate and claim our place by having a consistent date for the festival annually both within the literary and the NT arts calendar
- Be at the table at all key conversations regarding both NT festivals and writers festivals nationally
- Ensure the festival is on the radar with all key literary stakeholders (particularly publishers).

- 2) **Ensure our staff are leaders in their field**

### ACTIONS:

- Seek, secure and invest in at least one professional development opportunity for each of the key staff biennially (e.g. Aus. Co Individual Development grants)
- Ensure a skilled and engaged Board that actively supports and complements the Festival staff
- Value and embed Australian First Nations leadership and voices from our community to help shape a new model of NT Writers Festival staff, Board and Advisory groups
- Provide one intern opportunity annually, partnering with CDU.

# Strategic Flow Chart





# TARGET AUDIENCES

## compelling reasons for people to attend

The NT Writers Festival will be **the** writers' festival that every Australian wants to visit once, and then come back, year in, year out. It will be inclusive, attracting writers and readers across genres – fiction, non-fiction, children and YA, poetry, screen and stage.

It will provide audiences with an immersive and uniquely Northern Territory experience to understand ourselves and our nation, by discussing the big ideas, challenging the stereotypes and celebrating the past and future.

The festival will be brave, intelligent, thought-provoking and informative. It will be the perfect introduction for audiences to the NT, it will open eyes and ears to the stories of our land, it will celebrate community and uncover the sense of place.

The festival will be a leader in presenting Australian First Nations writers and stories. It will be a trusted connection for all Australians into our nations 60,000+ years of history and the longest living culture on this Earth.

The NT Writers Festival will offer a special experience for all our audiences both before, during and after the festival.

## forecast attendance

### 1 in 5 Australians attend literary events (*Australia Council for the Arts*)

The NT Writers Festival will increase audiences steadily and sustainably, over the next four years with targeted marketing and publicity.

The festival will aim to broaden its reach, attracting increasing local audiences and a wider demographic, including more young people, more males and more Australian First Nations audiences. It will also aim to increase visitation both from across the Northern Territory and from interstate.

AUDIENCE NUMBERS	2018 benchmark	2019 benchmark	2020	2021	2022	2023
ALICE SPRINGS		2249		2500		2800
DARWIN	2,500		2,750		3,000	

These benchmark figures are taken from NT Major events evaluation finding (113 surveys completed in 2018) and festival organiser counts in 2019

*'9 million Australians attended an arts festival in 2016. Arts festivals are diverse and accessible, bringing local communities together in immersive experiences and encouraging regional and international tourism.'* Australia Council for the Arts

### from within the Northern Territory

- Readers of all ages
- Book group members and library patrons
- Writers, published and unpublished, including writers of all genres
- Other cultural NT festival attendees
- Professionals living in NT including teachers, arts and social services professionals
- Ex-NT residents looking for a reason to make a return visit
- Friends and family of NT residents
- School students
- Young festival and event attendees including poetry slams and open mic sessions
- Males
- Australian First Nations peoples and communities

### from elsewhere

- Readers from interstate including book groups
- Other writers festival attendees from interstate
- Grey nomads looking for an interesting experience
- Active tourists including campers, hikers, environmental tourists
- Cultural tourists, particularly those seeking immersion in Australian First Nations culture
- Overseas visitors seeking a unique destination experience

*'The Northern Territory Writers' Festival 2019 was the most welcoming and inspirational event I have attended, as both a reader and a writer, in ages—if not ever. NTWF 2019 had a real warmth and integrity that shone through the carefully thought-out programming, beautiful setting and central respect for Aboriginal culture and storytelling.'* ANON



*'Research demonstrates growing potential for the arts to drive and support tourism activity, and for artists to increase their engagement.'*  
Australia Council for the Arts



*'I have never been at a festival where Indigenous writers were so feted and recognised in a genuine and celebratory way. Hooray for the NT Writers' Festival!'* Alice Pung

# SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

## the region – Northern Territory context

Northern Territory, also known as NT, has the smallest population in Australia. Based on research, Northern Territory population will reach 247,940 by the end of June of 2019. The calculation is based on the average growth rate of 0.88% over last eight years since 2011. About three quarters of the population lives in Darwin and Alice Springs metropolitan areas. The Northern Territory's capital city is Darwin. Darwin has an estimated population of over 120,000 people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders account for 26.8 percent of the Northern Territory's population.

NT has one of the youngest demographics in Australia. The 2016 census shows the median age of people in Northern Territory was 32 years. Children aged 0 - 14 years made up 21.6% of the population and people aged 65 years and over made up 7.2% of the population. The Northern Territory population is made up of 48.2% females and 51.8% males.

According to the Australian census, the top five ancestries for people in the Northern Territory are: Australian, English, Australian First Nations, Irish and Scottish.

The top five languages (other than English) spoken in the Northern Territory are: Kriol, Djambarrpuyngu, Greek, Warlpiri and Murrinh Patha. More than 100 Australian First Nation languages and dialects are spoken in the Northern Territory (NT). <http://www.population.net.au/population-of-northern-territory/>

The Northern Territory has a total area of 1,349,129 km<sup>2</sup> which accounts for around 17.5 percent of Australia's total land mass. The 'Top End' of the Northern Territory has a coastline that extends more than 13,500 km.

Tourism activity is an expanding sector with significant tourism economy and assets such as the world-famous Kakadu National Park, Uluru, Katherine Gorge and other national parks.

There are over 180 events in NT annually  
(<https://northernterritory.com/things-to-do/festivals-and-events>)

The NT Writers Festival is recognised as the major festival of words, ideas and stories in the Northern Territory. Alternating between Darwin and Alice Springs it will provide for readers and writers across the Territory and promote shared cultural experiences for locals and interstate audiences that showcase and enhance perceptions of the Territory.

## Northern Territory partners and stakeholders

- NT Writers' Centre members
- Writers and writing networks within the NT
- Other NT literary orgs / events - Dirty Word, Red Dirt Poetry and Borderlands
- Festival venues such as Olive Pink Botanic Garden and Brownsmart
- Hotel and accommodation providers
- Libraries and bookshops
- 'Non-eastern state' publishers –including Ptilotus Press, Batchelor Press, IAD Press, UWA Press and Magabala
- Schools and educational institutions, including Charles Darwin University
- Other cultural festivals and arts organisations, e.g. Barkly Arts, Red Hot Arts, Desert Harmony Festival, ANKAA and Desert
- Australian First Nation communities
- Australian First Nations operated Arts Centres including Hermannsburg Potters, Tjanpi Desert Weavers.
- Companies running tourist experiences including hiking and camping
- Local/NT media
- Funders - Arts NT, Festivals NT, NT Major Events

## Northern Territory competitors

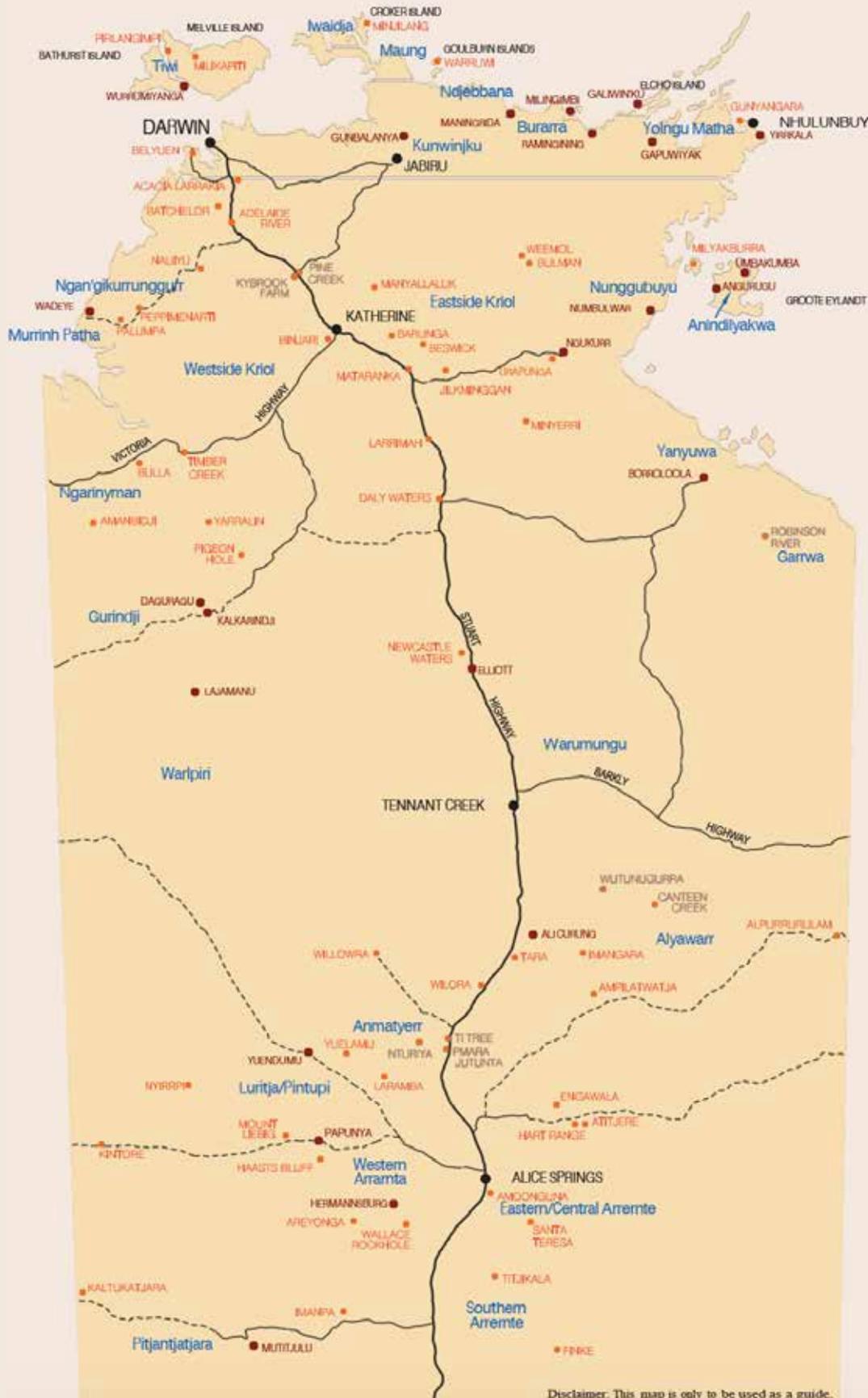
- Larger NT cultural festivals and events which soak up the available tourist \$
- Australian First Nations run festivals such as Garma competing for the same talent and audiences.

## internal organisational context

- Sound governance and Board oversight
- Strong, committed Membership
- Small but dedicated and capable staff
- Strong financial reserves
- Under resourced organisationally c/- other festivals and art forms

*'The NT Writers' Festival is unique among other festivals in Australia – it blends seamlessly into the local area, brings together a balance of local and interstate writers, a balance of emerging and established authors, and it is not afraid to address some of the most urgent and confronting issues concerning Australian literature head on.'* Michael Mohammed Ahmad

# Major Aboriginal languages of the Northern Territory



For information about the Aboriginal Interpreter Service visit [www.nt.gov.au/ais](http://www.nt.gov.au/ais)

*'When we tell these stories, they won't be lost anymore...I want our stories to survive.'* Maureen Nampijinpa O'Keefe

## the art form – national literature sector context

Australia is a nation of readers. There is also a strong culture of writing.

*According to Australia Council for the Arts research '79% of people read and 20% participate in creative writing.'*

It is recognised that stories and storytelling are the way we learn about ourselves and others.

Each of the capital cities in Australia has a major annual writers festival. These festivals provide a hub for readers to gather, attracting audiences of hundreds of thousands annually around Australia.

Additionally, regional writers festivals are being established all over the country. They have become the gathering place for readers and writers to share ideas and stories, to learn from each other about our nation and our people. Many have grown to become significant in terms of cultural tourism, attracting audiences to the region.

The NT Writers Festival is the only major writers festival in the Northern Territory and north of Brisbane. (A Military Writers' Festival recently started in Darwin by the NT Government, however this is more of an academic conference.)

### national literature sector partners and stakeholders

- Interstate writers – published and unpublished
- Australian First Nations writers from interstate
- Small presses – who publish Australian First Nations work
- Larger presses – seeking to build their lists and identify talent
- Publications – interested in diverse voices
- National writers festival network
- National writers' centre network
- Other partner organisations e.g. Red Room Poetry, ILF, Varuna
- Funding bodies – NT Arts, Australia Council, Cultural Fund, Regional Arts
- National peak bodies including APA, ASA, FNAWN

### national literary competitors

- Other destination-based writers festivals (e.g. Byron Bay & Ubud) competing for \$
- Streamed media such as Netflix and Stan, competing for people's time

# SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Two sites allow both communities access	Biennial nature of the festival and lack of continuity	To develop one overall brand and consolidate resources	Risk aversion to change and divided commitment to only one of the festival sites
Desirable destination and growing audiences	Costs of putting on a festival due to isolation	To develop interstate audiences	Lack of return visitation due to tyranny of distance
Inclusion of Australian First Nations voices and languages	Difficult to reach more remote communities	To develop deeper and ongoing partnerships with other Australian First Nations communities and arts organisations	Failure to access new Australian First Nations voices
Dedicated and skilled staff	Inadequate human resources to grow the festival	Invest in more sustainable levels of staffing	Staff burn out.
Financial surplus	Fragility of future funding and reliance on grants	Increase levels of philanthropy and sponsorship	Loss of continuity from year to year due to biennial nature
Strong Programming	Perception of insularity	To broaden program and become more ambitious	Loss of major funding sources
High levels of audience satisfaction	Publicity and marketing resources	To appoint a dedicated staff member and develop holistic approach	Competition with other festivals for talent
Alice Springs site	Lack of continuity of a Darwin site	Establish a permanent Darwin site. Develop an MOU with OPBG	Competition for the festival \$.
Skilled Artistic Directors	Two Directors leads to lack of continuity and momentum	Rethink the staffing	Festival fatigue
Mix of ticketing types	Complaints about ticketing systems and ease of purchase	Rethinking festival model and ticketing including providing day and multiday passes and introducing early-bird rate	Outgrowing sites
Great exchange btw local and visiting writers	Reliance on staff to provide author care	Building strategies for writer care	Burn out and loss of key staff
Schools events	Resources needed to service and reach more remote schools	Developing a more substantial schools program	Costs
A small team of dedicated volunteers	No dedicated volunteer coordinator.	Increase, train and schedule volunteer team	Burn out

# ALICE SPRINGS SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Quality Programming	Being Biennial – loss of traction and recognition	Potential for more national partnerships with the literary sector	Other writers festivals taking the talent
Australian First Nations voices	Dominance of English language in terms of books and publication	Increase presence of linguistic diversity and spoken languages	
Partnerships with community groups and organisations	No time or dedicated person to establish and maintain partnerships	More partnerships with local arts community	Other NT festivals/ competition
Olive Pink Botanic Gardens / venue	Outdoor venue challenges	Outdoor venue allows for growth	Weather events Small pool of production and arts workers
Community of local writers highly invested in the festival	Small Alice representation on Board	Build on the role of the Advisory group	Low literacy and reading in the region
The unique location of Alice Springs and its appeal	Difficult to get return visits	Build on capacity of location	Remoteness and costs incurred in terms of flights, time etc.
Audience growth over past 4 years	Lack of market strategies and resources	To attract interstate audiences	Costs for audiences to get there
Support from Darwin team	Staff precariousness Staffing capacity (lack of time and specialised staffing)	For two well-staffed offices of the one organisation – shared resources	Poor digital connectivity
Advisory group in Alice Springs	Lack of clarity of role/s of Advisory group.	Clarify role/s. Better utilise advisory group.	

*'The 2019 NT Writers' Festival in Alice Springs was unique in its commitment to creating spaces that honour and centre Indigenous voices, creating spaces for important conversations, and building capacity and capability through its excellent choice of facilitators. I loved that so much thought and care was put into curating a program that was diverse and intellectually rigorous. There was a sense of freshness and buoyancy to the festival ....I loved that cultural diversity was not tokenistic but embedded at every level of the programming.'*  
Roanna Gonsalves



"Alakenhe, so it does, Land teaches you. And Land memorises you. Itelarentye mpwarerle, it makes you remember. The Land is the real teacher." Margaret Kemarre Turner from Iwenhe Tyerrtye – What it means to be an Aboriginal Person (IAD Press, 2010). (Included in 2017 Festival installation Words in the Trees)



# DARWIN SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
NT Writers' Centre has strong presence due to its head office being in Darwin	Vastness between the two locations of Alice and Darwin organisationally	To improve branding of a single NT festival	Uncertain funding
Small but dedicated return audiences	Biennial event and loss of traction No fixed date No fixed location	To find a fixed date and a natural home.	Busy local calendar
Strong tourist presence	Transient/fickle audiences	Increase visibility of festival and marketing to interstate visitors	Expensive flights and accommodation for interstate and intrastate visitors
Urban Australian First Nations population	Limited engagement does not translate into audiences	To form more partnerships with Australian First Nations communities and organisations	
Big Names willing to come to Darwin while on tour	Limited local publishing scene	Develop national and international festival partnerships	Sprawling populations
Location, location	Tyranny of distance	To improve brand and marketing	Weather and cyclone season, lack of infrastructure such as public transport
A literate population with keen readership	NT writers not always engaged	Develop a Darwin Advisory Group	
Small, dedicated talented staff	Lack of human resources to deliver a professional event	To build a strong and effective staffing model to sustain the festival	Burn out
A big University close by	Not as engaged as could be	Possible student and youth events partner	

*'The Darwin Writers' Festival was intimate and welcoming. I spent time with other writers in relaxed, beautiful surroundings, discovered new work and made connections that I know will persist. The program was well curated, with a good mix of local and interstate writers, and the discussions I heard were insightful and lively. I would recommend it to writers and readers everywhere.'* Michelle de Kretser



*'Stories meet song, comedy meets poetry. This is a festival of life.'*  
Daniel Townsend



# EVENT BARRIERS

## **lack of adequate resources:**

A major barrier for any event is a lack of resources. Without adequate investment in future staff, marketing and programming the festival will struggle to grow. It is essential to invest the necessary resources to create a unique, bold and vibrant festival experience. Well managed investment leads to sustainability and growth.

## **poor programming:**

Without brave creative decisions, the festival cannot fulfil its potential. Having key creatives to develop programming and build strong and exciting festival content would be a barrier to growth and sustainability.

## **reliance on funding:**

Relying too heavily on grants and government funding will potentially mean the festival's resilience and sustainability will be hindered. The organisation must develop a sustainable financial model with clear strategies for income generation beyond government grants if it is to thrive, including a giving program, sponsorship strategies and increased income generation.





## EVENT UNIQUENESS

### what makes NT Writers Festival unique?

*'It's like nothing else, this writers' festival'* Alice Bishop

- The geographic location – remote from, but inspirational to, the literary landscape
- Proximity to key tourist destinations including Kakadu NP, MacDonnell Ranges (Larapinta trail) and Uluru and other cultural organisations
- Support of the local Australian First Nations communities and a willingness to share their stories and their language
- Access to NT's cultural and linguistic diversity
- A destination event for those who want to understand and learn about Australian First Nations culture and hear their stories
- The intimacy of the event and the outdoor settings

The NT Writers Festival is uniquely placed to lead the way within the NT as the only major literary event. NT Writers Festival enhances perceptions of the NT as a sophisticated, contemporary hub of stories and ideas. It can promote ideas of tolerance, understanding and diversity both within the community and to interstate and international visitors.

Equally, the festival can lead the way nationally in presenting our Australian First Nations stories, voices and languages.

You have only to look at what audiences understand by Australian First Nations cultural experiences and realise how well placed the festival is to deliver on this. (see diagram below from Australia Council for the Arts)



'The Story is the Land and the Land is the Story, The Story holds the people, and the people live inside the Story. The Story lives inside the people, and the Land lives inside the people also. It goes all ways to hold the Land.' Margaret Kemarre Turner from Iwenhe Tyerrtye – what it means to be an Aboriginal person (IAD Press, 2010). (Included in 2017 Festival installation Words in the Trees)



## what makes Alice Springs unique?

*'By far the very, very best (Writers festival) I've been to. In some kinda 'physic way' when I think of that weekend, and of the beautiful, moody, totally arresting Alice Springs, I'm frozen to that particular event and time. So, though my body is here in Canberra, a part of my heart and mind is somehow there - in Alice.'*

Paul Collis.

- Desert, iconic landforms and proximity to major tourist attractions e.g. Uluru
- Centre of the country – metaphorically and literally
- Once-in-a-life time opportunity for visitors
- The outdoor possibilities of hiking and camping
- Remoteness – night skies, a spiritual experience
- History – Hermannsberg and Santa Teresa
- Intimacy of the festival providing the opportunity for visitors to rub shoulders with NT locals

## what makes Darwin unique?

*'I think it's a great thing for Darwin, it's a chance to share stories, arts and really brings the community together, it's what I love about Darwin, the sense of community which is so important for our sense of belonging'. – Samantha Fry*

- Tropical environment
- Proximity to other cultures and languages - Indonesia, Arnhem Land, Tiwi Islands, Philippines, PNG
- Proximity to tourist attractions - Litchfield NP, Kakadu NP
- Outdoor settings that can be used – Deckchair Cinema, botanic gardens
- Top End Australian First Nations culture – proximity to communities
- Kriol culture
- Charles Darwin University
- Writing sector - Batchelor Institute Press, spoken word events
- Support from and access to funding bodies and politicians
- An educated public sector that are potential audiences



# FINANCIAL

## key financial objectives

Over the next four years, the Northern Territory Writers Festival will:

1. boost box office to 25% of income
2. increase \$ from sponsorship and partnerships and a giving program
3. maintain success levels in grants

The Festival is overseen by Northern Territory Writers' Centre who are financially responsible for the festival. The ED and Board are supported by a bookkeeper in presenting all budgets and financial reporting.

The organisation is subject to an annual audit which is presented to the Board and funding bodies. The audit presents the organisation as having a strong financial position overall as of Dec 2018 with a surplus of \$180,995.

The 2018 Financial report and annual report present a clear picture of the financials of the organisation. In 2018 the total revenue was \$436,287 and expenditure of \$443,096.

NTWC receives grants from both State and Federal bodies. NT Writers' Centre is the recipient of 4-year funding from the Australia Council for the Arts (2017-20). The organisation hopes to retain this for the next four years 2021 – 2024. This grant is tied to delivery of writer programs and the festival in particular. A major risk to the organisation is being unsuccessful in this next round. This would put stress on the organisation to deliver the festival and mean that it was reliant on project grants.

The organisation is strongly supported by NT funders with grants from Arts NT and Festivals NT. This includes grants for the festival as well as the NT Writers' Centre. Ongoing success in these grants rounds is anticipated.

The largest financial risk currently to the festival is the reliance on grants. The 2018 audit demonstrates income generated from box office is just 14% of income.

Our ambition is to boost box office to 25% of festival income over the next four years, with an eye to it being a sustainable level of 33% in the long term.

With very little raised currently through philanthropy and sponsorship currently, our goal is to increase this over the term of this strategic plan.

RPIs	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	%
Australia Council four-year funding	\$30,345	\$25,000	\$27,500	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	
Arts NT/CBF	\$30,000	\$70,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	
Other NTG grants	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$60,000	\$55,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	
NT Local Government		\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Monies raised through sponsorship	\$5,000	\$2,696	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$35,000	
Amount raised through a giving program	\$500	\$0	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	
Ticketing revenue	\$13,651	\$20,041	\$27,000	\$28,000	\$35,000	\$40,000	Festival box office target of 25% reached 2022 & 2023
Other income raised at event (e.g. bar)	\$3,689	\$4,127	\$5,500	\$5,500	\$6,000	\$6,000	
Income from fundraising (e.g. author visits and events)	\$0	\$0	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$93,185</b>	<b>\$138,364</b>	<b>\$175,000</b>	<b>\$183,500</b>	<b>\$196,000</b>	<b>\$211,000</b>	

These figures are based on the assumption of investment in human resources for marketing and development

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFIT OF THE EVENT

The NT Writers Festival has identifiable social, cultural and economic benefits.

## social

1. Developing literary skills in the NT
2. Developing a sense of community and value for diversity
3. Enhancing the NT community with a place to gather and share stories
4. Enhancing nationally and internationally an appreciation for Australian First Nations stories and languages
5. Improving general perceptions of the NT
6. Connecting NT writers to the greater community of Australian writers and writing to enable opportunities

*'3 in 4 Australians believe the arts are an important way to get a different perspective on a topic or issue.'* Australia Council for the Arts

## cultural

1. Developing a deeper awareness and appreciation of NT stories
2. Developing the skills of local and NT-based writers
3. Building community capacity and skills
4. Developing greater awareness and opportunities for publication of NT writers
5. Preserving Australian First Nations languages and culture

*'More Australians now believe the arts reflect Australia's cultural diversity and that they shape and express Australian identity.'* Australia Council for the Arts

## economic

1. Promoting local writers to wider audiences to increase sales and income from their published works
2. Developing skills of NT writers to enhance their capacity to earn an income
3. \$ spend in hosting interstate and international writers
4. Number of nights stay and \$ spend of audiences from interstate
5. The NT Festival has a policy of using local suppliers and staff where possible

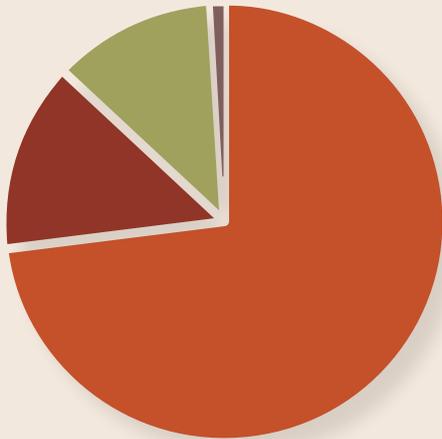
*'Festivals and events not only deliver a strong cultural identity for a region, but have the potential to deliver broader economic and social benefits for the community and the Territory.'* NT Major Events

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

MEASURE	2018 benchmark	2019 benchmark	2020	2021	2022	2023
Audience Alice Springs		2,249		2,500		2,800
Audience Darwin	2,500		2,750		3,000	
Ticketing revenue	\$13,651	\$20,041	\$27,000	\$28,000	\$35,000	\$40,000
% visitors from outside NT	13%	38%	15%	40%	20%	40%
% under 45	33%	24.5%	35%	35%	40%	40%
% Australian First Nations audiences	-	1.5%	5%	8%	12%	15%
% males	16%	17%	18%	20%	22%	24%
Book sales	\$8211	-	+10%	+10%	+10%	+10%
	2018 benchmark	2019 benchmark	2020	2021	2022	2023
Income raised from sponsors and partnerships (including in-kind)	\$5,000	\$2,696	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$35,000
	2018 benchmark	2019 benchmark	2020	2021	2022	2023
Income raised from Giving Program	\$500	\$0	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
	2018 benchmark	2019 benchmark	2020	2021	2022	2023
# of media partnerships	1	1	1	2	2	3
	2018 benchmark	2019 benchmark	2020	2021	2022	2023
Social media engagement	-	-	Develop metrics to establish targets			

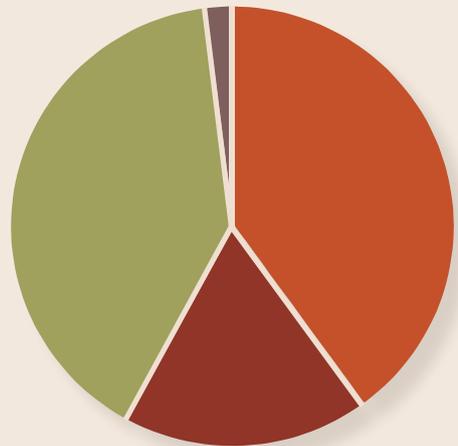
## RESPONDENT GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN

2018: 13% from outside the NT



● Locally within 15km ● Elsewhere in NT  
● Interstate ● Overseas

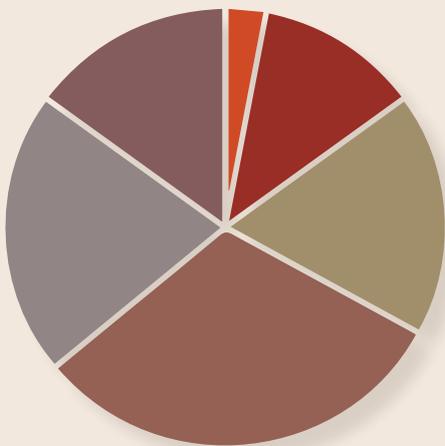
2023: 40% from outside the NT



● Locally within 15km ● Elsewhere in NT  
● Interstate ● Overseas

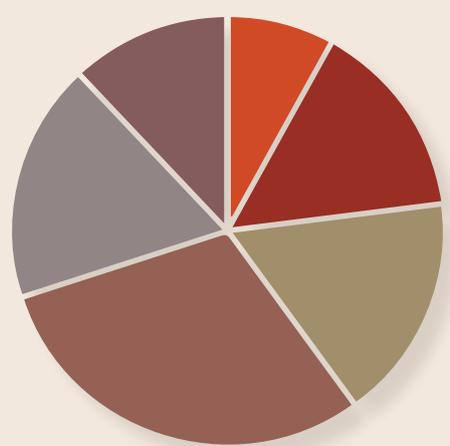
## RESPONDENT AGE

2018: 33% of respondents under 45 yrs



● 18-24 ● 25-34 ● 35-44  
● 45-54 ● 55-64 ● 65+

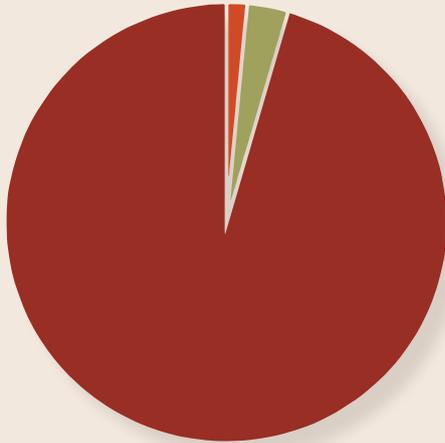
2023: 40% of respondents under 45 yrs



● 18-24 ● 25-34 ● 35-44  
● 45-54 ● 55-64 ● 65+

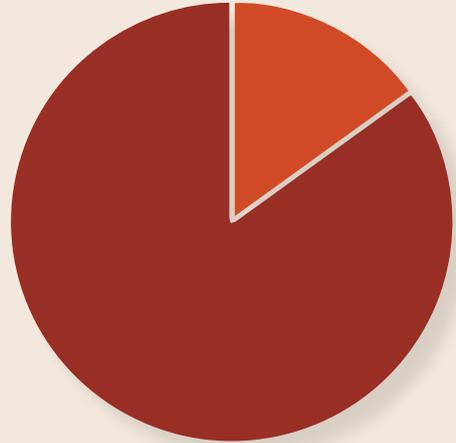
## AUSTRALIAN FIRST NATIONS AUDIENCES

2019 – 1.5% Australian First Nations audiences



● Australian First Nations ● Other ● Didn't say

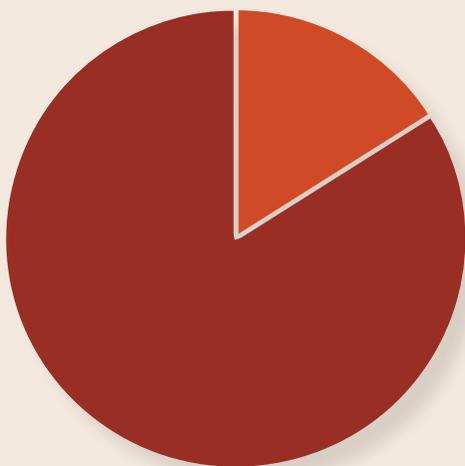
2023: 15% Australian First Nations audiences



● Australian First Nations ● Other ● Didn't say

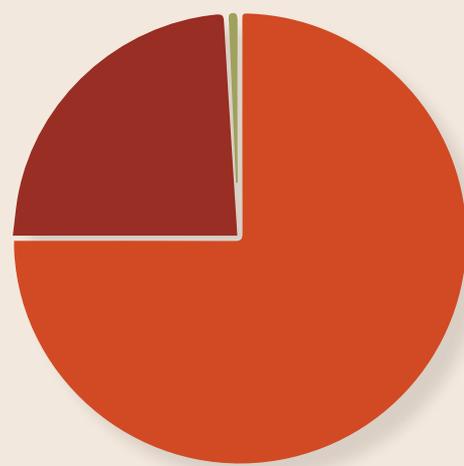
## RESPONDENT GENDER

2018: 16% were male.



● Male ● Female ● Other

2023: 24% male



● Male ● Female ● Other

# FESTIVAL OPERATIONAL PLANS

*'The Northern Territory Writers Festival is a unique event in Australia's literary culture...I loved the landscape, the locations for events, and the imaginative way each session was designed.'* Anthony Lawrence



## FESTIVAL SITE

The festival site in Alice Springs at Olive Pink Botanical Garden currently provides an ideal home for the festival. A natural amphitheatre with outdoor spaces, and catering on site, it offers an intimate and collegial festival experience with room for growth. In 2019, the festival added a marquee which accommodated growing audiences, enhanced audience experience and provided risk management strategies in case of weather events.

In Darwin, the festival is seeking a new and permanent site. Whilst more recently it has been held at Brownsmart, it has moved from site to site over the years. In 2020 the NT Writers Festival will investigate and establish a site which is conducive both to audience experience and festival atmosphere but which can allow for growth and development and build on its place-based programming.

The festival will continue to use and build on partner venues and outreach sites including libraries, schools and public venues.

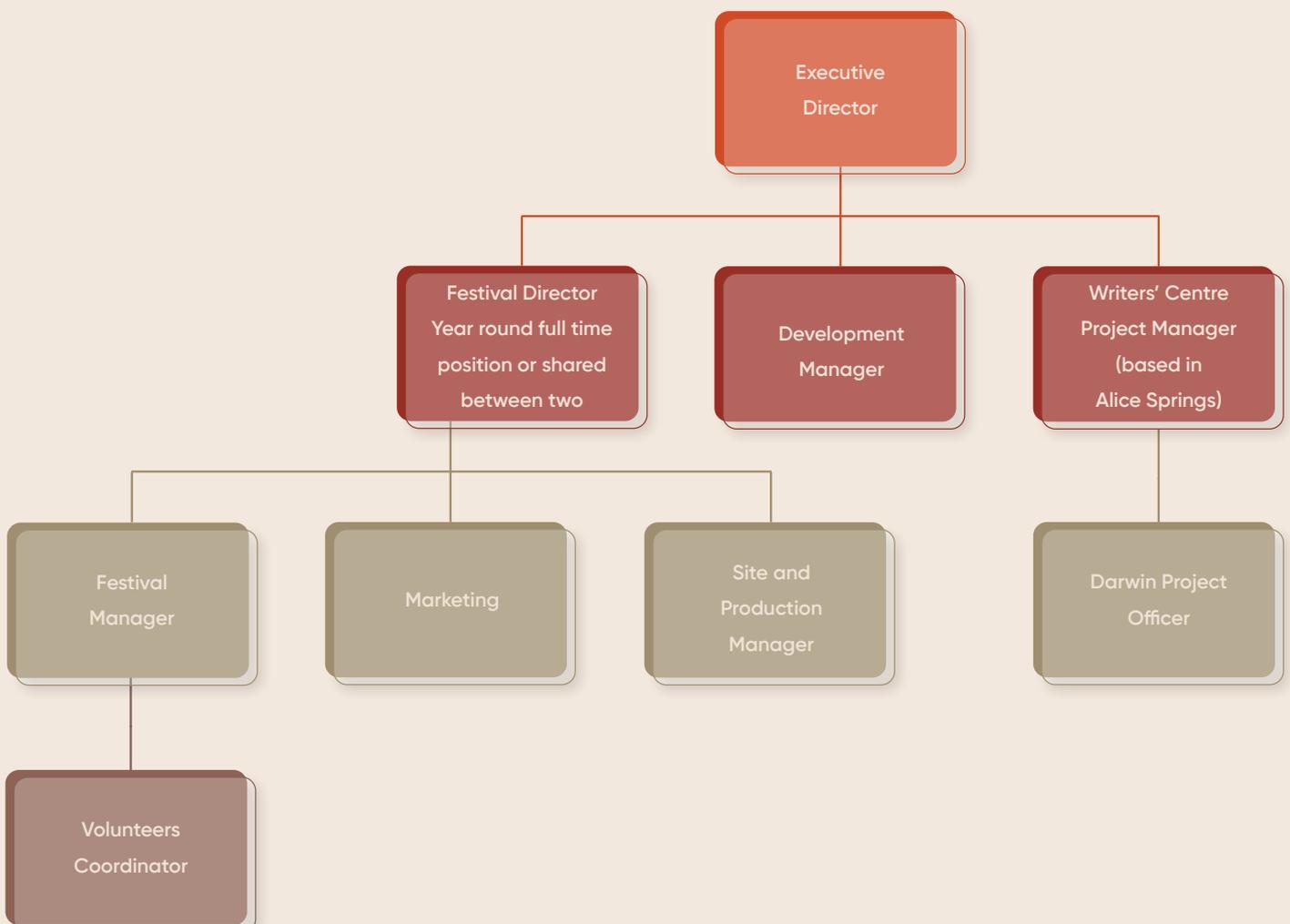
## FESTIVAL STAFFING

The festival is overseen by a Board who appoints an Executive Director and is responsible for strategic direction and financial operations.

The Executive Director oversees a small core of staff with casual and contract workers being brought in to boost capacity in the lead up to and during the festival. The festival aims to increase its capacity by investing in staff across the festival ensuring sustainability and continuity throughout the year and across the sites.

The festival has mechanisms in place to ensure safe and efficient delivery before during and after the festival. Over the next four years it will establish more sustainable staffing and timelines that will build organisational and operational capacity.

### PROPOSED EVENTUAL STAFFING STRUCTURE IN 2023



# OPERATIONAL DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

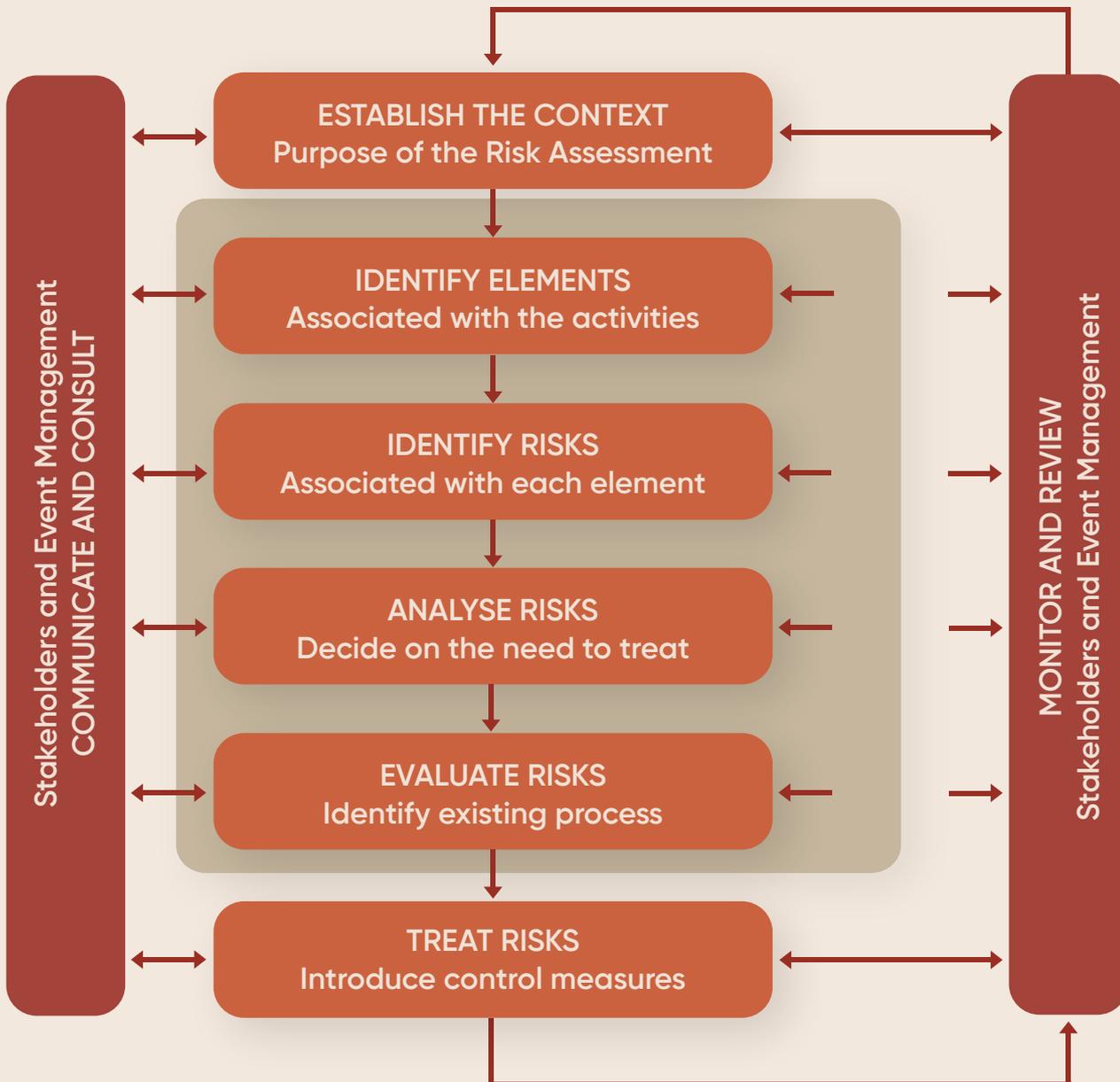
Operationally a suite of documents is available as set out in the checklist below.

These documents will be reviewed and developed continually over the next four years in accordance with best practice.

NAME OF DOCUMENT	CURRENTLY IN USE	COMMENT	2020	2021	2022	2023
MARKETING PLAN		Needs to be developed for next four years				
ACTIONS AND ISSUES REGISTER	✓	Darwin site will need to develop one for each new site		✓		✓
SITE PLANS AND VENUE MAP	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN & PROCEDURES	✓	Darwin site will need to develop one for each new site		✓		✓
FIRST AID ACCOUNTABILITY REGISTER	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
BUMP IN AND OUT SCHEDULE	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
FESTIVAL RUN SHEET	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
ARTIST CONTRACTS	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT PLAN	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN		Needs to be developed for next four years				
EVACUATION PLAN	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
CRISIS MANAGEMENT - RISK REGISTER	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
SAFETY INDUCTION BRIEFING	✓	Updated each year	✓	✓	✓	✓
COMPLIANCE REGISTER		Needs to be developed for next four years				

✓ Currently in place

# NT WRITERS FESTIVAL RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESS – OVERVIEW



NT Writers Festival would like to acknowledge the work of staff and the Board in developing this Strategic Plan.

All photos were provided by the NT Writers Festival and permissions to reproduce secured by them. All figures and statistics were sourced from records and reports provided by NT Writers Festival and are accurate to the best of their knowledge.

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A NEW KIND OF  
WRITERS FESTIVAL  
SHAPED BY PLACE