



WestWords

Sharing the wealth of words

Western Sydney's Literature Development Organisation

2021 Annual Report

Contents

Chair's Report	4
Executive Director's Report	5
Awards and Recognition	7
Our Remit: Greater Western Sydney	8
WestWords: Who? What? Why? How?	9
WestWords' Centres for Writing	10
The Writers' Pathway	11
School's Program	12
Workshops for Children and Young People	13
Emerging to Established Writer	15
Writers' Groups	19
Writing Competitions	20
Digital WestWords: workshops	22
Publications	24
Digital WestWords: Sharing the Stories	26
Exhibitions	28
Fundraising	29
Treasurer's Report	30
Our Board	32
Our Staff	33
Our Partners	34
The Writers	35

WestWords

ABN 60 603 106 136

41 Hunter St. Parramatta NSW 2150 • PO Box 3708 Parramatta NSW 2124
T 1800WestWords • E admin@westwords.com.au • W www.westwords.com.au



**IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE YOUR STORIES AREN'T TOLD
NO BOOKS. NO FILMS.
NOTHING ABOUT YOU, YOUR FAMILY OR YOUR CULTURE**

WestWords gives Western Sydney
a voice, a space to be heard and celebrated.

Join us in creating, building and empowering our communities.



CREATING AND SHARING THE STORIES OF WESTERN SYDNEY

I have been fortunate enough to collaborate with WestWords many times during my career as a writer in Western Sydney, and I consider them to be the most engaged and impactful writing organization in the country. Their work with the writing culture in Western Sydney has transformed the local literary landscape into a thriving ecology of writers, illustrators, and editors.

Luke Carman: writer and lecturer Western Sydney University



We remain really appreciative and in awe of the energy of WestWords and the passion you have for promoting literature in the community.

Theresa Lock: Outreach and Marketing Coordinator, Blue Mountains Library



This is a life changing experience for me.

Zoe Ghani

Western Sydney Emerging Writers Fellow

The manuscript she developed as a fellow will be published by Hachette in 2022



Pre-residency

The response from students to our impending Writer in Residence program with Catherine Jinks

The students are very excited (some girls even cried!)

Post-residency

Based on what I have learnt from watching the workshops that Catherine did with the students, we have rewritten our whole Creative Writing program.

Cara George: Head Teacher English - Blaxland High School



Chair's Report

2021 continued the difficulties brought on by the pandemic.

During the first half of the year, we prepared to return to face to face programming but were thwarted by on-going lockdowns.

We enjoyed the first year of our multi-year funding from Create NSW. We also received continuing support from the Cultural Fund of Copyright Agency, City of Parramatta Council, Blacktown City Council and Campbelltown City Council. The State, Federal and Copyright Agency COVID relief packages were critical in ensuring we survived through COVID. The NSW Government Start and Restart Package enabled us to initiate the new Living Stories Western Sydney Writing Competition, presented in partnership with WestLit Libraries.

The support of Campbelltown City Council meant we were able to operate from the Wedderburn Writers' Retreat while still maintaining our connection to Parramatta. Like many organisations, the WestWords board met via zoom throughout the year. We missed the contact and the ideas generated by personal interaction but the relationships of the members remained strong and focussed on our support of the staff in providing the premier writing organisation in Western Sydney.

This status was acknowledged by our winning, for the second year in a row, the Commonwealth Bank Excellence in Arts and Culture prize in the Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence. Michael Campbell, our executive director was named the Outstanding Business Leader in the AAA City Removalist Award at the same event.

For the second year in a row, our major fundraising effort was an online Art Auction featuring material donated by children's book illustrators. We thank them for their generosity. We also ran Booktober, where participants nominated to read a certain number of books during October and were sponsored by supporters.

Our Vice Regal Patrons, the NSW Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson were to launch the Living Stories anthology. Unable to launch in person they pivoted to make it a live-streamed event. They also created a video in support of Booktober.

The Board acknowledges the difficulties imposed on WestWords by COVID. In that context we congratulate Michael for his leadership, his constant labour and his strategic thinking. He has been well supported by part time staff: James Roy, variously Program Manager and Producer, Christina Donoghue, Associate Producer, Kathie Elliott, Development Manager, Christian Pazzaglia, Digital Content Producer and Sheryl Cootes, Schools Program Manager. Our thanks go to all members of staff.

I would also like to thank the members of the Board, Robyn Ewing, Lucy Brotherton, Brett Perry, Vivienne Skinner, Jacqui d'Warte, Eyob Yesus, and Jasmine Lee. Unfortunately Jasmine Seymour was unable to remain on the Board.

Despite the obvious challenges the program continued to deliver strongly for writers and the communities of Western Sydney.



Libby Gleeson AM



Executive Director's Report

As we ended a difficult 2020 I was hopeful that the year ahead would offer a new start, a chance for a re-energised program. Throughout 2020 we navigated the COVID 19 pandemic by closely following Governmental guidelines, making strategic business and programming decisions to adapt to the circumstances. So, when it looked as though we could return to in-person in March, and bring the digital capacity we built through 2020 into a multi-layered delivery of our program, the future looked exciting. But that was not to be.

2021 was characterised by multiple pivots as we responded to the changing impacts of new COVID variants, lengthy lockdowns, rapidly changing health guidelines, levels of risk for the writers, partners, staff, audiences and collaborators, and artists getting COVID. It affected operations, the program, and our financial and positioning. With all in-person programming, and maintaining a digital office, it required strategic thinking and judicious decisions to ensure our sustainability and potential to maintain our ongoing agility to deliver in difficult, uncertain and changeable circumstances. We weren't alone in this. So many in the arts sector found 2021 an exhausting year.

We did a slow return to in-person programming from March, and with support from NSW Government, through its Start and Restart funding package, we launched, in collaboration with WestLit Libraries, the inaugural Living Stories Western Sydney Writing competition. The program saw us deliver over 40 free in-person and online workshops across Western Sydney. It was a wonderful, large-scale undertaking, with over \$10,000 in prize money being awarded to writers, aged ten-to-adult, from across the region. However the launch of the associated publication and announcement of the overall prize winners was scheduled for the first Monday of the winter school holidays which unfortunately was also the first day of lockdown.

This lockdown extended through the majority of the second half of the year. We worked primarily from home. What became plainly evident was that whilst task-based activity is possible in these circumstances, the collaboration, creativity and focus that characterises being together in the same room is difficult.

The writers we work with responded in different ways to the conditions of the pandemic. Some found the ongoing underlying stress and uncertainty, the juggling of home, work, portfolio careers desiccated their creativity. Others found that as we were forced into our homes and our worlds got smaller spaces opened up for their writing to flourish. All found being isolated from a community of peers difficult. We knew that, to the extent we could, providing employment was critical.

We found the understanding, collaboration and support of all of our collaborators sustaining. In the face of the tenuousness, the arts sector revealed its generosity, just as the importance of the role of arts and culture to the health and wellbeing of society more broadly, was being recognised.

Despite a challenging year WestWords enjoyed significant achievements:

- In partnership with WestLit Libraries and with the support of NSW Government, established Living Stories, Western Sydney Writing Competition inviting writing to the theme *Are We Here Yet?*
- Partnered with the Whitlam Institute to establish a WestWords writer-in residence at the Female Orphan School.
- Established Daffodil Cottage residency program for mid-career and established writers to undertake collaborative residencies, made possible through the generous support and collaboration of the property's owners.



ACTIVITIES & SERVICES

It has been another extraordinary year! In the face of all its uncertainty, unpredictability, lock downs, isolations, challenges and exhaustion we ran

244 activities facilitated by 152 writers and allied artists

In 2020 we ran 147 activities
An increase of 97!

The increase has been a result of the additional 46 Living Stories workshops and our response to COVID encouraging an increase of more targeted smaller engagements and digital offerings.

- Partnered with University of Sydney, Bell Shakespeare and Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School to develop Adrian Howe's *Othello on Trial* the audience is invited to judge whether Othello is guilty of murder or whether, as he argues, his "crime of passion" is, to some extent, forgivable because he was driven momentarily insane by Iago's exploitation of Othello's jealous nature. Pertinent to the increasing visibility of domestic violence within our society.
- To celebrate Refugee Week 2021 we partnered with MECA (Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency) to bring the stories of six people (one couple) who came to Australia as refugees and are establishing their lives here, to a series of podcasts and postcards.
- We worked with Campbelltown City Libraries to run a series of masterclasses and workshops, leading to the inaugural Fisher's Ghost Writing Prize and the establishment of two ongoing writers' groups.
- Joining our online offerings of slams, workshops, masterclasses, readings, interviews and commissions on our YouTube channel, we added a monthly series of Illustration workshops called *Draw This!*
- We extended our national and international reach for our programming through our YouTube and podcast channels.
- We won Telstra's competition to be given complimentary adspace worth in excess of \$30,000 at the round 9 NRL the Penrith/Sharks match at Panthers Stadium, Penrith on May 7th. Our logo was superimposed onto the grass during the match which was broadcast nationally on Channel 9.
- We partnered with the Kindness Pandemic to raise our awareness to their constituency in excess of, 21,400 people.
- With Taurus Marketing we reviewed and revised our Marketing and Digital Marketing strategy, knowing that after two years of lock-down and how we engage with our constituency will change as we emerge into a post-COVID world.
- With the pause on in-person programming for the majority of the second half of the year it allowed us to offer a greater number of individual mentorships to emerging writers who were close to completing first drafts of major works; partnered with Giramondo to offer the inaugural WestWords/Giramondo Emerging Writers Fellowship; and offered an additional residency for an emerging illustrator at Pinerolo .
- This all alongside our year-on-year programming.

Thank you in particular to the team: James Roy, Kathie Elliott, Christian Pazzaglia, Sheryl Cootes, Chris Adams and Christina Donoghue. Thank you too for the support from the Board. The Arts on every level is an act of collaboration, and I couldn't ask better colleagues. For us to be recognised in the WSABE Awards for a second year in a row for Excellence in the Arts is testament to them.



Michael Campbell



2021 Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence: Excellence in Arts & Culture & Outstanding Business Leadership

In a ceremony held on 24th November at Rosehill Racecourse WestWords' achievements were recognised, winning the Commonwealth Bank Excellence in Arts & Culture award for the second year in a row. Our Executive Director, Michael Campbell was awarded the 2021 Outstanding Business Leader Award. The Awards are run by the Western Sydney Chamber of Commerce.



To be recognised for the strength, quality and impact of our artistic program winning, for the second year in a row, the award for Excellence in Arts and Culture at the WSABE is deeply validating. Couple this with our Executive Director's award for his business leadership of a not-for-profit Arts, service organisation, coming out of two years of COVID disruption is an extra-ordinary achievement. It is not just an honour for Michael and WestWords, but it is also an endorsement of the critical and fundamental role that the Arts contributes to a thriving society, and a vibrant economy.

WestWords and Michael were featured in the *WSABE Leaders Collection: Showcasing 32 Years of Business Excellence Across the Greater Western Sydney Region*.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Telstra Name in Lights

WestWords was a major winner in Telstra's national Big Plugs for Small Business *Name in Lights* promotion. The prize included Virtual Grass advertising signage, stadium perimeter LED Advertising boards, a corporate hospitality box, and a WestWords promotional video run at half-time at the Round 9 NRL match between the Penrith Panthers and the Cronulla Sharks at Panthers Stadium in Penrith on May 7th. The match was telecast nationally on Channel 9.



Sydney Living Museums: A 1000 Words Exhibition

In 2020 we partnered with Sydney Living Museums on A Thousand Words exhibition which presented 100 of the most compelling photographic images from the rich collections of Sydney Living Museums and the State Archives and Records Authority of NSW, created between the 1880s and the 1980s. WestWords was commissioned by Sydney Living Museums to engage ten emerging western Sydney artists to respond to an image they selected from the exhibition.



The commissioned writers and illustrator were: Hani Abdile, Eunice Andrada, Ethan Bell, James Elazzi, Zoe Ghani, Christina Huynh, Yumna Kassab, Enoch Mailangi, Nardean and Vivian Wei.

In June the exhibition won the 2021 Museums and Galleries National Awards, Level 2, Temporary or Travelling Exhibition Category.

The Kindness Pandemic

The Kindness Pandemic, a group of over 500,000 members, primarily on Facebook, committed to intersectional kindness, was instigated in 2020 during COVID because "so many people need acts of kindness right now; and so many others want to hear stories of kindness." The way this is done is via FB and the creation of gratitude journals that then get shared. The journal and the gratitude challenge was started last year by Kofi Aden, a 13-year-old in Melbourne during their first lockdown.

We partnered with Kindness Pandemic with two initiatives with the intent of raising awareness of WestWords to that constituency. The first was by reaching out via our newsletter and socials to provide them with the tools provided by the Kindness Pandemic with which to create their own gratitude journals which we and the Kindness Pandemic shared online.

I run a not-for-profit, arts organisation providing services to people of Western Sydney. The sector has its challenges!

As someone who has worked in the Arts their entire life, I find it astonishing and remarkably foresighted that WSABE honour the work I do and value the contribution I make. I couldn't be prouder to be recognised as 2021 Outstanding Business Leader.

Michael Campbell:
Executive Director
WestWords





REACH

In 2021,

20,984 people directly participated in our activities:
3,758 in-person, competitions or live streams
14,840 YouTube
2,386 Podcast

In 2020,

13,281 people directly participated in our programs

That's an increase of 58% on 2020 direct participation rates!

In fact, just our 2021 YouTube audience eclipsed our total 2020 audience by 1,559!

In addition, more than **7,500 people** attended our exhibitions despite the COVID restrictions

Total reach: Over 28,500 people engaged with our programming

plus the marketing reach of the 500,000 of the Kindness Pandemic and national exposure via the Telstra *Name in Lights* campaign.

WESTWORDS: WESTERN SYDNEY'S LITERATURE DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION Our Remit: Greater Western Sydney

- 9.1% of Australia's population lives in the Greater Western Sydney region. ^{*} *That's 1 in 11 Australians.*
- 49.7% of Western Sydney's population is under the age of 35. ^{*}
- GWS residents represent over half the world's population coming from more than 170 countries and speak over 100 different languages. [#]
- 33% of people in GWS were born in countries where English was not their first language - with India, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Lebanon, Iraq, Fiji, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Pakistan ranked highest. ^{*}
- Greater Western Sydney has the third largest economy in Australia after Sydney and Melbourne CBDs. [#]
- Greater Western Sydney has higher than average unemployment and lower than average salary levels. There are high levels of mortgage and rental stress. The region is heavily car dependent with resulting impacts on air quality, health, quality of life and household budgets. Of the 544,000 jobs located in the GWS, 75% of those who live in the region also work in the region. [#]
- The majority of new immigrants (60%) who come to Australia settle in GWS and over the past decade 50% of these arrivals were from Iraq and Sudan. [#]
- One-fifth of Australia's Aboriginal population is located in GWS, with the densest clustering being in Blacktown and the Macarthur region. Of these, 60% are aged under 24. ^{*}



Sources: ^{*} 2016 Census; [#] Regional Centre of Expertise, Western Sydney University

WHO?

WestWords is an independent not-for-profit cultural organisation with DGR status serving, and located within, Western Sydney with centres in Parramatta, Campbelltown and Blacktown. The nine-member board is led by award-winning author Libby Gleeson AM, with Bryan Brown AM and former Parramatta Lord Mayor and Western Sydney director of Sydney Chamber of Commerce, David Borger, as its ambassadors. Our Patrons are The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of New South Wales and Mr Dennis Wilson.



WHAT WE DO

- WestWords celebrates and champions the people, places and cultures that are at the heart of Western Sydney.
- We promote and encourage reading, writing and story-making by children and young people living in Western Sydney and beyond. In so doing we develop and enhance community sustainability through cultural vitality.
- We provide pathways of opportunity for young people to develop authentic and articulate voices and showcase them through innovative literature-based, multi-arts programs.
- We support the establishment and ongoing careers of professional writers and illustrators.

To achieve these goals, we deliver a comprehensive program of residencies, fellowships, workshops, performances, presentations and publications.

WHY?

We believe the power of literature and literacy (written, oral and visual), self-expression and creativity can change lives and the experiences of communities.

HOW?

We work with like-minded individuals and organisations to identify the need, imagine the potential, then work together with our partners to create programs that are uniquely suited to the people and the context.

WHO DO WE SERVE?

We work with writers and artists of all ages and at all stages of their career with a strategic focus on children and young people. We collaborate with teachers, schools, universities, community, and arts organisations. We target culturally rich and diverse communities that historically aren't recognised for the value of their cultural expression, frequently appearing as low on SES indicators. We believe in long-term engagement rather than short-term intervention with programs and partnerships running over the course of years. We invest in bringing established authors and artists to mentor our participants.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- We bring cross-cultural communities together to learn from each other.
- We break down barriers through sharing experiences, identifying common issues and concerns.
- We generate fresh artistic insights for the creative expression of WS voices.
- We create a platform for emerging voices to realise their potential.
- We create career pathways for established writers to mentor successive generations.
- We develop confidence and self-agency to the young people we work with.
- We develop skills for life.

ONLINE REACH

During the course of 2021 our Youtube channel WestWordsOFFICIAL had:

14,840 active engagements with our online content, ie, the number of views by people who watched 1,008.6 hours of our videos, with 230 subscribers

We increased viewership from 6,500 in 2020, to 14,840

That's an increase of 128.3%

Audiences predominantly originated from (in order): Australia (71.4%), Russia United States Philippines Ireland Singapore United Kingdom Vietnam

On our podcast channel, incorporating the WestWords Podcast and the mini-masterclass series, we had an audience of 2,386 people (2,464 in 2020)

Audiences predominantly originated from (in order): Australia (68.3%) United States India Ireland United Kingdom Philippines Portugal Canada Spain Germany Taiwan Indonesia The Netherlands Singapore New Zealand



Extracts from
Stepping Stones
An anthology of work
from students from
The Ponds High School
arising from
WestWords' workshops,
masterclasses and
residencies

*The breeze smells more
of ash than sweet flowers.
Beneath my weight the twigs
and branches disintegrate.*
Natalya

*Cry in grey;
Bleed in Technicolour*
Hannah

*Seasons:
Remember her summer;
remember his winter*
Melody

WestWords' Centres for Writing

In late 2020, with the onset of COVID, we left our Centre for Writing in North Parramatta, moving the centre of our physical operations to the beautiful bushland setting of Wedderburn Writers Retreat in Campbelltown. We are immensely grateful to Campbelltown Libraries and Campbelltown City Council for their ongoing support. We are also very appreciative of Blacktown Library Services who provided us with storage space as we weathered the uncertainty.

We recognise that in our role as a service organisation it is incumbent on us to provide pathways of opportunity for the development of the authentic and articulate voices from the region and to provide visibility for the sector to the wider community. Writers need space to work and to feel themselves part of a supportive and well-resourced community. We recognised that need, and consequently we continued to increase and strengthen and build our online programming, services and communication to adapt to the changing times.

Following health and governmental advice, our operations and activities were conducted in a combination of remote and in-office. We became highly adaptable at switching at any given moment from in person to digital without causing too much disruption operationally, financially or to our various participants and stakeholders.

The pandemic enforced us to build a greater digital capacity, and in doing so our we became a virtual Centre for Writing – increasing our reach to facilitate, create and share the stories of Western Sydney to increasing Western Sydney, national and international online audiences.

In December 2021 we signed the lease on new premises in central Parramatta so that we could, in 2022, return to the in-person programming and services in various centres across Western Sydney to complement our increased digital presence nationally and internationally.



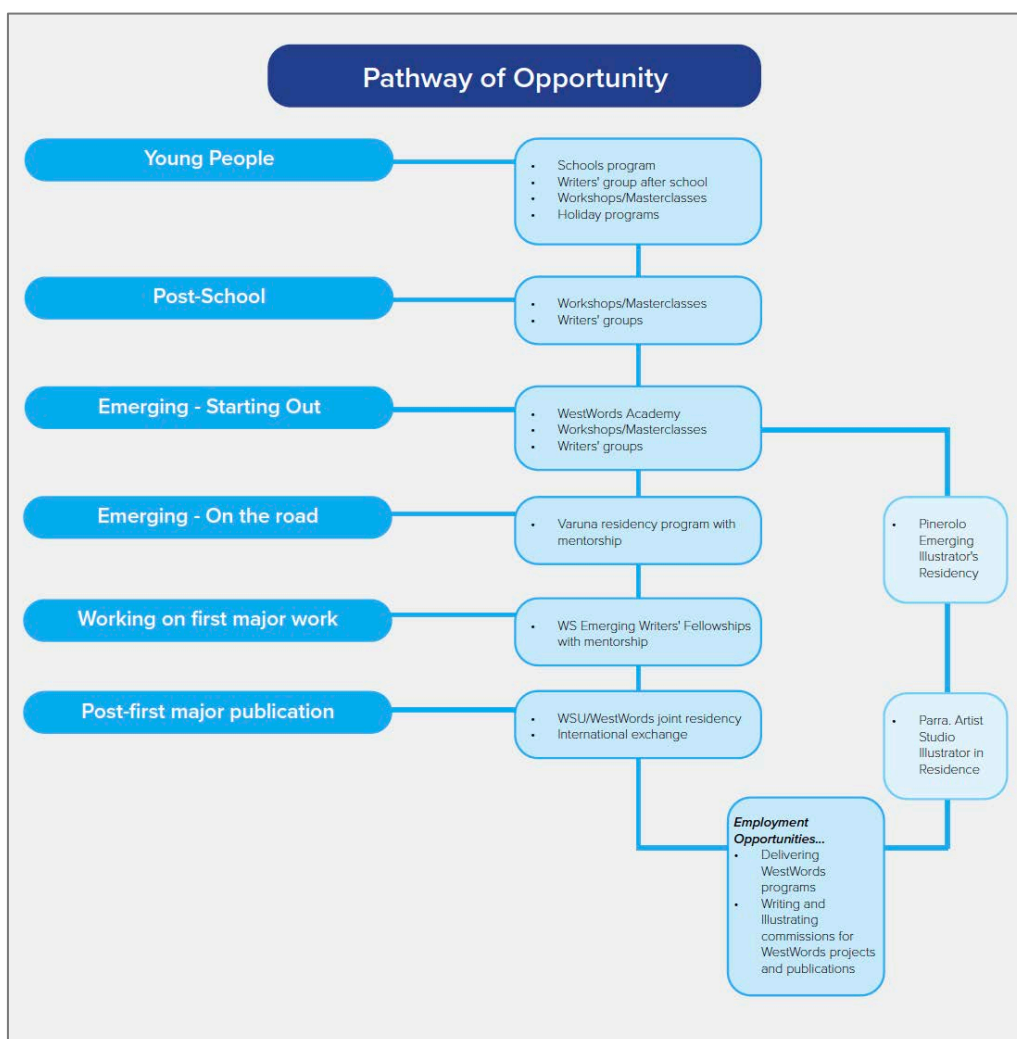
Wedderburn Writers Retreat, Campbelltown

The Writers' Pathway: Facilitating and Creating the Stories of Western Sydney

Fundamental to the services we provide to writers and illustrators, is a pathway of opportunities to nurture their development freelance artists, support the creation of new work, and to assist career sustainability. We see this pathway playing a critical role in the staged evolution of emerging writers in Western Sydney and to an emergent literature of this place. Throughout this progression WestWords provides 360 degree career support to writers to achieve their potential, including writers' groups, commissions, workshops and masterclasses. This pathway moves from:

- the school years to post-school,
- to the WestWords Academy where emerging writers get trained in the practicalities of being an independent artist in today's changeable world,
- to the WestWords/Varuna and Pinerolo illustrators' residencies where emerging writers and illustrators need time away from busy lives to focus on their work to complete a substantial portion of their writing,
- to the Western Sydney Emerging Writers' Fellowships where writers on the verge of completing the manuscript for their first major work receive 6-8 months of tailored mentorship, income relief and career advice
- to the WestWords/ Western Sydney University/ writers in residence program for writers at that difficult moment post their major work to work on their second and build their skills to teach, mentor and pass on their knowledge and experience to the up and coming,
- to providing employment for writers to maintain their careers.

Taking emerging writers through our programs has seen writers like Rawah Arja become a WestWords/Varuna writer in residence to employing her to facilitate our after-school classes and a number of our writers in schools' program, seeing her debut book being published receiving accolades and award nominations, to becoming a WestWords/WSU writer in residence to develop her second novel.





The Writers' Pathway: Children and Young People

Schools' Program

Developing the skills of Western Sydney writers from the earliest of ages is core business for WestWords. Activities often intersect with our online programming, competitions, and also include workshops and masterclasses, residencies in community, in-school and after-school; holiday programs; mentorships; facilitated short and continuous writers' groups; The Clubhouse website, publications; and so on, as highlighted elsewhere in this report.

In partnership with schools

Key to providing the best opportunities to the children and young people of Western Sydney is working in partnership with schools delivering individually tailored programs with professional writers, illustrators and editors. To maintain those high standards, in February we engaged, for the first time, a dedicated Schools Program Manager, Sheryl Cootes, who brought with her three decades of experience working in Western Sydney schools as a teacher, assistant Principal and Acting Principal as well as being President of the Children's Book Council of Australia, Blue Mountains sub-branch. All our programs into schools are subsidised to a greater or lesser extent. We offered a range of free (thanks to the generous support of Copyright Agency) and part fee paying programs. After the disruption of 2020 much of first term was working with the schools to program into terms 3 and 4. Towards the end of term 2 we had scheduled 13 writer-in-residence programs with an increased number of associated publications, more workshops, masterclasses and author talks. However, with Sydney going into lock-down at the start of the winter school holidays, followed by remote learning and subsequent restrictions for incursions into schools, the program for the remainder of the year shifted into acting in a supportive role as teachers struggled with maintaining student engagement with online learning of the core curriculum. There was not much appetite for digital engagement. Nevertheless, we worked with the following schools, deferring planned programs for many others into 2022:

- Blacktown South PS
- Blaxland HS
- Bennett Rd PS
- Braddock PS
- Chifley College Bidwill Campus
- Harrisdale PS WA
- Kingswood Park PS
- Northmead Creative and Performing Arts HS
- Springwood HS
- Strathfield Girls HS
- The Ponds HS
- West Wyalong HS
- Winmalee HS

Each school's engagement is created in close consultation with the teaching staff to uniquely tailor the program's offerings and includes consideration of the choice of writer. With the move to remote learning, online workshops, masterclasses and residencies opened up the choices of who to select as the best writer to meet the students' needs. Consequently, we engaged more regional and interstate writers to deliver our programs and we could deliver Western Sydney based writers into schools well beyond Western Sydney.

We also ran professional learning for teachers including a presentation and practical writing workshop focussed on 'character driven writing' for ALEA Sydney West for over 40 teachers. At Bennett Road PS, teacher professional learning was undertaken in conjunction with executive and classroom teachers to develop teaching and learning programs and competence in explicit teaching using literature in classrooms. As part of the *Othello on Trial* project teachers joined and participated in the rehearsals taken place at Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney.

As with any customised program the genres of writing covered are many. In 2020 we ran programs focussing on creative writing techniques, speculative fiction, crime writing, poetry, slam, reportage, illustration and editing. Some of our five-six week residency programs culminated in publications of the students' work.

*Our schools programs are supported by
Cultural Fund Copyright Agency (Writers in Western Sydney Schools),
Create NSW, WestWords and the schools themselves.*

COPYRIGHT AGENCY
CULTURAL FUND



In 2021 we worked with 13 schools, despite the restrictions and lockdowns

including five in-school residencies, workshops, masterclasses and the performance of *Othello on Trial*

engaging 2,626 students



Othello on Trial

20th May saw the culmination of a significant partnership between WestWords, University of Sydney, Department of Performance Studies, Bell Shakespeare and Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School that involved over 90 Year 10 students, as jury members, determining the guilt or innocence of Othello.

The program forms part of criminologist Adrian Howe’s doctoral thesis and has involved extensive research, the writing and development of the script, rehearsals and dramaturgical input, close collaboration between each of the partners to bring Othello to trial. The comments and feedback from the jury of Northmead students formed another stage in the script’s development - their comments covering issues to do with the efficacy of the script, what resonated for them as young people, the assumptions they brought to the work that were tested and challenged specifically in relation to the substance of the legal process Othello was subjected to, societal context, the presentation of mitigating factors that could reduce the severity of his sentence, the Shakespearean source material were all incorporated into the final version.

In preparation for the trial, the Year 10 students had studied Othello within their classes. Teachers participated in a full day workshop/rehearsed reading with the scriptwriter, director and actors at Sydney University in the week prior, inviting feedback and collaboration to ensure the piece strongly resonated with its audience and tied into the curriculum to enliven and deepen the students’ engagement with Shakespearean text and its contemporary relevance and context.

Students entered the hall on the day of the performance/trial, buzzing with excitement as they were assigned their jury groups. They listened intently as the performers: judge, prosecuting attorney, defence attorney and Othello, presented the case and arguments for and against a conviction of Othello being guilty of murder or manslaughter. Key to interrogating prejudices within the text and the reader/audience: a black man was cast as the prosecutor, a white man was cast as Othello.

Set against daily media stories on domestic violence and the treatment of women more broadly, teachers and students reported that the experience provided an enhanced experience of understanding the complexities of Othello’s character and motivation behind his crime.



The verdict was unanimous, and all juries sentenced Othello to lengthy custodial sentences after arriving at a ‘guilty’ verdict to murder.

Workshops and masterclasses for children and young people

We began the year scheduling in-person workshops, masterclasses and holiday programs across Western Sydney. Our Autumn school holiday program was populated by over 40 free in-person and online workshops presented in partnership with WestLit Libraries as part of our Living Stories writing competition. We worked closely with our partners to bring all writing groups online, including the LGBTQIA+ writing group and the African Australian Literature development program after a return to in-person at the start of the year. We also introduced two virtual writing groups in partnership with Campbelltown City Libraries which attracted a mix of local, national and international participants. Each group also received masterclasses to meet the stated needs of the groups.

After the focus on the *Living Stories* workshops in the first half of the year, and without the possibility of coming together from June, we ran a variety of workshops and masterclasses making them available via our YouTube channel - WestWordsOFFICIAL. The writing and illustrating workshops were run for various ages, and in various genres. They included: Creative writing with Jodie McLeod and Alexa Moses.



The experiences with Jodie were the happiest days of MY LIFE!!!

The activities that were given to us really inspired me to try and try. Even though it wasn’t easy because of the fact that we weren’t together (Home Learning). I will NEVER forget our fun times.

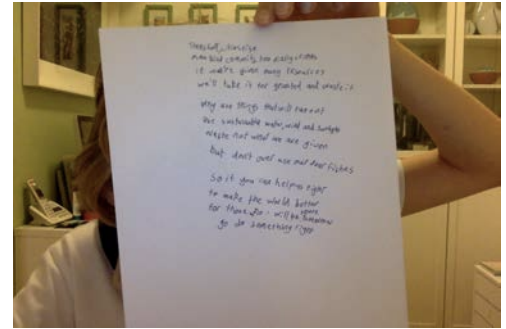
Iliena
Bennett Road Public School.
Writer-in Residence program
with Jodie McLeod





After School classes

Our after-school classes continued online this year, catering for three age groups: school years 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. The facilitators were Catherine Pelosi, and Michelle Hamadache, writer, lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Macquarie University and Managing Editor of *Mascara Literary Review*. We are a Creative Kids provider: this is a NSW Government scheme to help kids get creative with a voucher available with a value of up to \$100 per calendar year for each student aged 4.5 to 18 years old enrolled in school.



We also ran some individual mentorships, notably working one-on-one, with a talented young man in Cobham Detention. Writer Scot Gardner worked with him on his manuscript in a series of zoom sessions, providing further inspiration and skills.

Draw This!

In June we introduced *Draw This!* a new monthly series of step-by-step videos presented by professional illustrators explaining how to draw a character from their books or a subject of their choice. These videos were:

- James Foley draws Thor
- Elizabeth Stewart draws (Funny) Dinosaurs
- Mitch Vane draws Tamara Noodle
- Liz Anelli draws A Stormy Sky
- Narelda Joy draws Moonbeam
- Alaa Alfaron draws Watercolour Monsters
- Liz Duthie draws Olive



Mini-masterclasses

As part of our Mini-masterclass podcast series focussing on different aspects of writing and the writers' life, there were specific episodes that were pertinent to children and young people. These were available via all the major podcast providers, accessible via our website, the podcast website and highlighted within The Clubhouse website.

Storyroom

In February to March we ran an eight week writing program for young people aged 11-14. Entitled Writing Great Stories and facilitated by Laura Greaves we presented the series in partnership with Hawkesbury Library.

Parramatta Libraries we had planned a series of *Storyrooms* across the course of the year in both the Parramatta and Epping libraries. *Storyroom* would run over five weeks where children and young people spend four weeks building their writerly skills before presenting their work to friends, family and staff in the fifth. Unfortunately the first Parramatta *Storyroom* was cancelled half-way through and the Epping program didn't have the chance to begin.

The Clubhouse

The Clubhouse is a dedicated website for children and young people, primarily ages 9-14. Tested with young people, the site includes an interactive blog where kids can chat with a monthly guest blogger, hear what they have been up to, and they can tell them about their stories. We have videos of writers reading from their latest books, writers and illustrators giving in-depth tips and tricks for their writing and drawing, they can read the work of other kids their age. We provide information about competitions, after-school and holiday workshops we run. There is also information for parents about how they can use the NSW Government Creative Kids vouchers.



Hi WestWords

Lesley attended my 7 year old daughter's school today (Bennett Rd PS). This was the highlight of Evelyn's school career so far. She is an avid reader and was so inspired and awed by her. She immediately downloaded two of Lesley's books to her kindle when she got home and was pouring over them. It makes me so happy to see my child enjoying reading so much. I just wanted to thank you.

Colleen



It's been a fabulous couple of days up in Springwood.

This morning's class (two classes together) was phenomenal.

These kids were writing poetry that would blow the top of your head off.

This beautifully honest, raw and moving work, coming from a group of kids who claimed at the start they didn't really like poetry.

WOOHOO!

Even the kid who I was told was a bit disruptive was quiet and the teachers were amazed that he focused and even wrote a poem.

I read his out, not knowing that he was the disruptive kid, and I pointed out to the entire class that some of his lines were truly magical, that he had used language so beautifully. It all felt very worthwhile.

ali whitelock

Yr8 poetry workshops at Springwood High School



The Writers' Pathway: Emerging to Established Writers



WestWords Academy:

The life of a writer is more than just writing

The Academy is a year-long training program for emerging writers and multi-disciplinary artists. It provides early career development for writers, supporting and mentoring them to hone their craft, develop projects and seek opportunities. Once a month WestWords ran online seminars, led by expert facilitators focussing on administration for the independent artist, pitching, building community, presentation skills, grant writing, building your 'brand', where to find outlets for your work, resources amongst others. We also provided wrap around support with individual mentorship in grant writing, their writing, opportunities to be published including with Sydney Review of Books.

Achievements include: publication in various online journals including the Sydney Review of Books and Daily Science Fiction, landing an agent in NYC, the formation of writers' groups and collectives, major work completed on manuscripts and pitching to publishers and agents.

WestWords is an organisation with a good heart. It really shows. And we were all talking among ourselves about how we felt "held" during that year, and how hard it is to not have that anymore. But you are showing us that it is not the end! Marta Moravetzka

I went from grasping at the fringes of being an emerging writer, to coming out the other end feeling firmly embedded in the emerging writing community. Ally Burnham

Varuna: The National Writers' House

In October we partnered with Varuna to give for four emerging Western Sydney writers from diverse backgrounds, Kennedy Estephan, Michelina Sirianni, Blake Curran and Shannon Anima the chance to spend a week at Varuna to write in seclusion. They worked on:



- Kennedy Estephan *A Good Heart* (literary fiction)
- Blake Curran, *A Town Called Cancer* (fiction)
- Shannon Anima, *The Running Game* (fiction)
- Michelina Sirianni, *My Blood Red Heart* (memoir)

It wasn't at all clear whether the program would proceed, but with restrictions starting to ease and the ability for social distancing within Varuna, the writers were able to undertake

the residency in-house. The mentors were Jack Heath and Zoya Patel.

Pinerolo: The Children's Book Cottage

In late 2021, as the restrictions were easing, we offered two emerging illustrators week-long residencies at Pinerolo at Blackheath. The aim of this opportunity is to extend illustrators' knowledge of picture book creation and design, the process of publishing and the publishing industry, through space to work and daily consultation with mentor Margaret Hamilton AM, a professional publisher of picture books for over thirty years. The successful candidates were Nisaluk Chantanakom and Melanie de Boehmler. A third residency, for Elizabeth Stewart, was undertaken early in the year having been postponed from 2020.



MENTORSHIPS UNDER LOCKDOWN

There were many challenges faced during the course of the year, however the circumstances have allowed us some flexibility within the budget to offers of support to an increasing body of writers on the pathway to publication. We partnered with Giramondo Publishing to award the WestWords/Giramondo fellowship on the same terms as the Fellowship we have been running with support from Copyright Agency over the course of ten years. We could offer two emerging illustrators residencies at Pinerolo where as in previous years we were limited to one (see Pinerolo

WestWords Varuna Emerging Writers resident Shannon Anima

I just wanted to let you know how valuable this whole WestWords Varuna experience has been - and we're not done yet!

I'm sure you hear this all the time - forgive my cliched enthusiasm.

I won't bore you with how every detail of the Varuna experience... It has been thoroughly perfected for our pleasure and productivity.

A rough poem I pencilled in the early morning. (With apologies and poetic licence regarding my companions' and earlier residents' sleep habits and alcohol consumption!)

First Draft

*I am the storied ghost
a gliding figure
glimpsed before dawn
opening draperies
tidying crockery
small tasks
the woman of the house
or perhaps the woman's
woman
would have performed
the others still slumbering
their heads full of verse
or last night's wine*

*I wander early and alone
like the mist
of this mountain home
the breath of trees
soft and mingling
an exhalation
a draft
seeping under the door
trailing tender fingers over
books
plumping pillows
in this shrine to writing
Varuna Writers' House*

*I am your handmaid
kneeling before the day
my prayers to your muse*



section). We then looked to the applications and comments from the judges from our Emerging Writers residency at Varuna, Western Sydney Emerging Writers Fellowships and Pinerolo Emerging Illustrator Residency. There were many writers and illustrators who showed significant promise who would benefit from personalised mentorship and guidance. The mentorships spanned 2021 and into 2022.

Extended mentorships

With the opportunity to offer more focused individual manuscript appraisals with associated mentorships, we facilitated three writers who were close to having manuscripts ready to pitch to publishers.

- Sarah Duffy worked on her literary fiction novel *Poppy* and the *Train to Nowhere* with James Roy
- James Elazzi worked on a screenplay titled *Cello* with Ian David
- Rhys Haynes worked on his novel *Adam Miller: Running Man* with James Knight
- Libby Hyett worked on her YA novel, *Firedance* with Kristina Schulz
- Kim Pham worked on her screenplay *Bird Hands a Fishmint Bouquet* with Ian David
- Kirra Rose McGoldrick worked on her one-woman theatre piece *Ostrich* with Patricia Cornelius
- Caitlin Hodder worked with editor Alison Fraser on *Stop the Uproar Silence*
- Antony Maklouf worked with Margrete Lamond on his illustration portfolio

WestWords/Giramondo fellowship

Martin Reyes identifies as a 'queer Filipino-Australian' emerging writer. He is working on a project of autofiction, lightly informed by his 'experiences and perspective as a queer person of colour and a child of Filipino migrants'. It will be a non-chronological collection of stories, following a coming-of-age protagonist navigating new terrains of intimacy and desire. Mentor: Ivor Indyk: publisher Giramondo Publishing

Campbelltown writing program

In partnership with Campbelltown Library we are ran a series of two online fortnightly workshops, each workshop group receiving three sessions each. The narrative non-fiction was with Chloe Higgins. The fiction with Luke Johnson. Additionally we ran a masterclasses for each group. Laura Greaves on memoir/history; and another on fiction with Fiona Murphy. Two ongoing writers' groups evolved out of these workshops and masterclasses. James Roy led the fiction writers' group whilst Sienna Brown facilitated the group for writers of non-fiction and memoir. The groups met online every fortnight. Participants were a mix of writers from the local area, but also Alaska and Texas.

Female Orphan School Writer-in-Residence

WestWords and the Whitlam Institute partnered to bring a writer-in-residence at the former Female Orphan School in Parramatta. The Female Orphan School is the oldest three-storey building in Australia. It is one of the earliest examples of social policy in Australia, when the

Governor of the time, Governor King, and the Reverend Samuel Marsden decided there should be a school for girls in the Colony where they would be 'protected and could learn to read and write and to gain employable skills'. Focusing on the early days of the colony, little is known about these girls who arrived in School between 1818 to 1850. We know it wasn't like the other oppressive institutions of the era – these girls included a Maori princess, the daughters of servants and convicted criminals. During her residency,



Female Orphan School Writer-in-Residence



author Laura Greaves researched and developed stories of these young women. The aim is that her discoveries will form the basis for a major work.

There is a little bit of magic at Pinerolo. Just like the room of requirement in Harry Potter books, Margaret Hamilton was able to change her support through my mentorship week to match my changing needs.

I left the weeklong mentorship with a strong sense of purpose.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Margaret and WestWords. There are very few opportunities like this in Australia and I feel extremely fortunate to have had this experience at such an early stage in my creative career.

Elizabeth Stewart: Emerging Illustrator in Residency

I learnt so much from Chloe in the few sessions that it leaves the other courses in the dust.
Lyndell

Feedback from Campbelltown workshop series with Chloe Higgins

Western Sydney

Emerging Writers' Fellowships

The Western Sydney Emerging Writers' Fellowships annually offer three Fellowships for writers on the brink of potential publication. One of the Fellowships granted is for an emerging writer specifically writing for children and/or young people. The 2019/20 fellows were Aishah Ali, Claire Cao and Erin Sayers. As part of their fellowship winners receive a program of tailored mentorship. The mentors were Manisha Anjali, Melina Marchetta and Ben Peek respectively. As an example of our strategic approach to providing a pathway of opportunity for writer development, Erin was a recipient of the WestWords residency program at Varuna: The National Writers' House. With the support of the Cultural Fund of the Copyright Agency the fellowship program has been running since 2011 and has directly assisted Western Sydney writers achieve their first major publication, many which have been recognised with Premier's Literary Awards, 2018 fellow Chloe Higgins' debut work, which she worked on as part of her fellowship *The Girls* was published by Picador in August and was shortlisted for Non-Fiction prize and won the People's Choice Award in the 2020 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. 2018/19 Fellows, Fiona Murphy with *The Shape of Sound* and Zoe Ghani *Pomegranate & Fig* have contracts with Text and Hachette respectively.



In the light of morning, Lilly realised that sleeping with Kenny the groundskeeper was probably not the best decision. As she watched him snore, she tried to swallow. Her mouth was dry and her throat was sore from the whiskey and cigarettes they'd shared the previous night. Lilly sighed, she had always been drawn to the broken, found the desperate wonderful company. This had served her well in the sisterhood, but now that she had left it was unhinging her. Maybe she was now desperate herself, maybe she always had been.

"Morning darlin, gotta take a piss," said Kenny, suddenly rolling over her to get to the toilet. Kenny had wild, pit bull eyes, ginger hair and the thin ankles of a heroin addict, which he used to be. Lilly sat up, they were in Kenny's cabin which was furthest from the main hall. This would make it easier for her to sneak back to her own cabin without any staff seeing her, relationships and/or sex between staff was strictly forbidden at the Mount Bright Spirituality Centre. She could hear Kenny singing the theme tune of Fame as he pissed hard against the porcelain. Then she heard him turn on the shower, this was her time to sneak out.

The 20/21 Fellows are Kim Pham, Emma O'Neill-Sandham, and in a joint fellowship, Alaa Alfaraon and Vivian Pham. **Kim Pham** intends to finish writing her screenplay *Bird Hands Beaver a Fishmint Bouquet* with mentorship from **Ian David**, former president of the Australian Writers' Guild, and the writer of numerous AFI winning shows. **Emma O'Neill-Sandham** is working on completing her manuscript *The Death Fixer*. Emma's mentor is award-winning YA writer **Simmone Howell**. **Vivian Pham & Alaa Alfaraon** intend to explore complex, political issues through the eyes of a child in their graphic novel *The Book of Fixed Stars* with WA writer/illustrator **Campbell Whyte**.

Honestly, you have no idea how valuable this experience has been for me, both in helping me to hone my craft, and in the very difficult task of quietening the constant humming Westie voice that repeats: 'but bra, who would want to read your words?' and, 'what kind of work is writing anyway?' The Fellowship is pretty bloody amazing!

Emma Sandham-O'Neill: WS Emerging Writers Fellow

WW/WSU Writers in Residence Program



The WestWords Writing Centre and The Writing and Society Research Centre at Western Sydney University partnered to provide an opportunity for two early career writers to develop their professional skills and develop new work through a tailored program of activities across both organisations. During the residency which spanned both 2020 and 2021, Kavita Bedford worked on a memoir-style novel, a follow-up to her novel *Friends & Dark Shapes* (Text, Australia and with Europa

Editions, USA, 2021). Rawah Arja worked on a collection of short stories reflecting her experiences in Punchbowl. Her debut YA novel, *The F-Team* (Giramondo Publishing), was released in September 2020.

Western Sydney Emerging Writers Fellowships and WW/WSU Writers in Residence Program are supported by Cultural Fund Copyright Agency

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The WW/WSU Writers in Residence Program is in partnership with Western Sydney University

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



from *The Death Fixer*:
Emma Sandham-O'Neill

I am so thankful for my time at Daffodil Cottage where I received the solitude and space to finish my novel, We Swallowed the Stars.

This residency is pure gold.
Nix Hamilton



Post from WestWords' collaboration with The Kindness Pandemic

I see a poster for a garage sale: a pre-Covid hobby of many people at weekends. It flaps in the breeze in the fading light. There's four kids playing in next door neighbour's yard, a great sight, but I worry that they're too close. I dream of being chased, cleaning and germs all in one night every night and wake exhausted. In the cafes, their chairs and tables are stacked up the walls looking like they're gone out of business. I sit at a bus stop after a 4km walk and threaten to sit on the ground if they move me on. My fav café won't let me use their toilet, for fear of germs. I follow a man with a 6 pack - not on his abdomen. The traffic is still even at the dreaded school-run hour. The nav-lady bleats that there are school zones but it's holidays and school a remote memory. The parks are all taped up to keep the kids from the equipment; it's really sad. The walkways are covered in joggers and walkers and kids on wobbly bikes. My corner shop is suddenly busy with locals buying tissues and flour. We drive with a letter from my

Daffodil Cottage Residencies, Katoomba

In early 2021, the owners of Daffodil Cottage, Rachel and Katy, approached us and generously offered to make their property in Katoomba available for artists who require the time, space, and quiet to work intensively on an artistic project in an idyllic mountain setting. Their primary motivation was to give back to the artistic community in-kind, thereby helping artists inject extra energy and inspiration into their work. The WestWords Daffodil Cottage Artist Residencies were divided into ten five-night slots and three twelve-night slots with callouts held in three rounds during the course of the year. The uniqueness of the residency was dictated in part by the house, it being ideal for a person seeking isolation from normal life or two people with individual workspaces, to allow for collaborative partnerships. For instance: an author and an illustrator; two collaborating writers; a composer and a librettist; a writer and their editor, or indeed being able to bring your partner or dog. The costs to the writers were low. Each successful applicant undertook a community activity eg schools' visit, online workshop etc. Not all successful writers got to take up their residency, however in between restrictions and lockdowns the following did get to enjoy the cottage:



Helen Thurloe and Belinda Smith. Both award winning writers their collaborative project was *Burning the Seeds*. The title refers to the germination of the rare pink flannel flowers in the Blue Mountains in the summer of 2021, following the previous year's ferocious bushfires. While these fires and their aftermath inform the greater story, the crucible for the story is COVID-19, and its effects on two Sydney families.



Yumna Kassab and Gabrielle Carey. The collaboration explores the connection between psychosis and art in the form of a creative essay and explores how psychosis figured in the body of work of these creative people and draw connections between psychosis and the ways it may have sparked novel and unusual tangents. Despite discussing this project at length, the writers had not previously had the uninterrupted time to develop the project.

Brooke Robinson, a playwright and novelist from Campbelltown who wanted solitude to complete her literary crime novel, *The Interpreter*, a novel about the important but little-known world of language interpreters who work in the police and justice system. The protagonist is a police and court interpreter, a female vigilante who takes the law into her own hands and deliberately mistranslates witness statements to secure convictions, until she imprisons an innocent man.

Hayley Lawrence and Nix Hamilton undertook a collaborative residency, each working on their own manuscripts. Hayley was a finalist in the 2017 Vogel's for her debut YA novel *Inside the Tiger* and Nix worked on *We Swallowed the Stars* a dark romance that explores the difficulties in realigning your world when significant relationships dissolve. As childhood friends, they provided 'honest and constructive' feedback on their works in progress.

The focus of **Peter Ramm's** residency was his first collection of poetry titled for the Blake Prize shortlisted poem, *Waterlines to a Kingfisher*. Much of the collection involves and considers walking—in and out of one's past, on new paths and old, among trees and the birds, and most of the time, in solitude or with memories or with children. The collection approaches a range of poetic forms. In this residency he worked on a small number of the 95 potential poems for the collection as well as editing it as a whole.





The Writers' Pathway: Writers' Groups



The African Australian Literature Development Program

The African Australian Literature Development Program began in 2020 to support, develop, share and celebrate the richness of the stories of African Australians within the multi-cultural context of Western Sydney.

Run by WestWords, in partnership with the African Australian Advocacy Centre, and supported by the Adès Family Foundation, the

program spanning three years aims, through stories, to create a bridge of understanding and empathy between communities and generations, and create a sense of belonging and pride.

We began the year continuing the group which had transitioned online during the 2020 pandemic response. We were in the process of returning to in-person when once again the uncertainty of COVID-19 led us back online. Oluwanifemi Temitayo Maxwell facilitated the group maintaining its core participants. We also ran two masterclasses with Mawunyo Gbogo on narrative non-fiction. The effects of the extended lock-downs on this group was marked, affecting not only personal circumstances but also their writing momentum. Which in turn led to a holding over the publication of their work to 2022.



Supported by



LGBTQIA+ writing group

Every second Wednesday throughout the year the LGBTQIA+ writers' group convened, first at Parramatta Library then virtually as restrictions were brought in. The group shared and got feedback on their writing in a creative space where everyone 'got' what being queer meant, no need for explanation. The group continued to be facilitated by Wilfred Roach. We ran two masterclasses with the focus determined by requests from the group. The first was poetry delivered by Lou Garcia-Dolnik, a young poet who was shortlisted for the 2020 Blake Poetry Prize. The second from Tanya Vavilova who led a guided discussion focussing on getting published, navigating the lines between identifying as a 'queer writer' and being boxed in/limited as only being identified as a 'queer writer', along with the pressure of obligation/ responsibility/ representation that comes with writing from a particular community and how that affects your writing.

Like with the African Australian Literature Development Program the lock-down affected the group and their level of creative output. The publication of their work was held over to 2022.

The LGBTQIA+ group is supported by the Aurora Foundation



doctor and a copy of my ABN as proof of identity, if pulled over by police. I take flowers to the cemetery and meet a friend there with flowers for her parents and have to find the gravestones in ten acres of grass. The neighbours, who rarely have guests, have a few who get too close to their three toddlers making me wince. I send a 'help your neighbour' newspaper coupon to a neighbour of 42 years and get an email reply that she's ok. Even though she lives diagonally opposite, we've never met. I can now catch a train to the city, without touching a surface as long as Richard presses the lift button with his elbow, as mine's not knobby enough. There are faded posters hung up about local markets and abandoned musical nights. I prune the garden every day for a week. I buy a jigsaw and only do 12 pieces. The garden looks magnificent and there's no one to admire it. Dad thinks it's so great to get a parking spot every day in the main street. Dad's neighbour, whom he's never met, comes to see if he's okay. Scammers con him out of \$1000 and return two days later to try again. We walk every day, just to buy a coffee. We pay a ridiculous amount of money for hand sanitiser. When we take the car for servicing they have no health policy. One week later they refuse to open the door or boot or wash the inside of the car as they do usually do. The NBN cut off our landline and the internet is patchy. I have to do a lesson online soon.



The Writers' Pathway: Writing competitions

Living Stories: Are We Here Yet?

The Living Stories Western Sydney Writing Prize is a new creative writing competition providing opportunities for young and emerging voices, a forum for reflection and conversation between communities, and insight for audiences both here and well beyond the region to appreciate and begin to understand the rich tapestry that is Western Sydney.

2020 was difficult, and with the investment made by the NSW Government through its Arts Restart stimulus package, we were able to approach WestLit Libraries to co-present this prize for the very first time. This attracted other support, notably from Australian Catholic University as the sponsor for the 16-18 year old category.

The prize was open to residents of Greater Western Sydney across four age categories: 10-12yrs, 13-15yrs, 16-18yrs and 18+. Entries could be in the form of a poem, short story or personal essay. To support the writers in their creations, in little over a fortnight, we ran 36 in-person creative writing workshops facilitated by 18 writers in libraries across Western Sydney, with six more online.

The writers were asked to respond to theme *Are we here yet?* The entries were assessed by 23 judges drawn from each local community, as defined by each of the 13 council districts and Western Sydney writers. The judges arrived at a regional winner and highly commended entry. The winners from each local government area then went to a second round vying to be overall winner and highly commended in each category.

Each of the local adult winners received \$300, and each of the local junior winners received \$100. Highly commended entrants won \$100 (adult) and \$50 (junior). The overall adult winner received \$1,000 and each of the three overall junior winners received \$500. Highly commended entries received \$500/\$250. In total a prize pool of over \$10,000.

The book showcasing the 67 works that were the winning and highly commended entries from each Council district was to be launched at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre on Monday 28th June. Unfortunately we found ourselves in lockdown again to stem the spread of the virulent delta variant of COVID-19. Instead our patrons her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC and Mr Dennis Wilson launched the publication and announced the winning and highly commended entries in an online event. The digital publication is available here:



<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/living-stories-publication-prize-announcement/>



Hi, my name is Pratyusha and I just wanted to express my appreciation for 'Are We Here Yet?'

Reading it made me grasp the diverse experiences of our community, and the way that words and literature helps us to make sense of that and build a home here.

As an Indian woman and the child of first-generation migrants, I feel so uplifted and hopeful after reading it.

We have a voice, and clearly, we have the courage to make that voice heard.

What Matters?

The *What Matters?* writing competition invites students from years 5-12 from across NSW, Victoria, WA, Tasmania and the ACT to write a 400-600 word piece on 'what matters' to them and why – fact or fiction, poetry or prose. The program is run by the Whitlam Institute. WestWords' Executive Director Michael Campbell is one of the judges and WestWords provides a prize of a virtual author visit to three schools chosen from the shortlisted entries for the competition. Melina visited Strathfield Girls High School in Sydney, Isobelle Carmody virtually went to Harrisdale Primary School in the southern suburbs of Perth, WA, and James Roy to West Wyalong High School in regional NSW.

Blacktown Mayoral Creative Writing Prize

For the third consecutive year WestWords, in partnership with Blacktown City Libraries and Blacktown City Council, ran the Blacktown Mayoral Creative Writing Prize 2021. Entrants wrote a short story or poem responding to the theme of *The only way is...* and the total prize pool was \$1,600. The Mayoral Creative Writing Prize is a chance to showcase and foster the talents of Blacktown City's aspiring writers. Blacktown City Council introduced the competition following the National Year of Reading in 2012 to celebrate the stories of Western Sydney. In its 11-year history, the Prize has encouraged children, teenagers and adults from Blacktown City to embrace their inner writer. This year the competition attracted 210 entries. The judges were Daniel Gobena (MECA - Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agencies), and writers Lili Wilkinson and James Roy.



Fisher's Ghost Writing Prize



Each November, the legendary Festival of Fisher's Ghost comes alive in Campbelltown. The Festival is steeped in history, dating back to 1956. It is named after Australia's most famous ghost, Frederick Fisher. 2021 marks the inaugural Fisher's Ghost Writing Prize to coincide with the Fisher's Ghost Festival held in early November. We received 98 entries across all the categories. The judges, Tony Park, Kate Liston-Mills and Christina Donoghue, assessed the works

on their originality and creativity, the construction and use of language, (including creative expression, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation and spelling) and the way characters, atmosphere or setting was developed, and engagement with the theme, *Hiding in plain sight*. The Prize was open to adults and children in Grade 4 and above, who live, or go to school, in Campbelltown City. Entries could be in the form of short story, narrative non-fiction, memoir or poetry. In partnership with Campbelltown City Libraries and Campbelltown City Council.



The Blake Poetry Prize

Towards the end of 2021 we opened the submissions for the 2021 Blake Poetry Prize. This competition challenges Australian poets to explore the spiritual and the religious in a new work of 100 lines or less. This is the third time we have run the prize, in partnership with Casula Arts Powerhouse and Liverpool City Councils. The announcements will be made in the first part of 2022.



Wish I Didn't Have To: Ella Stainwright

Winner: Short Story 12-14 yrs, 2021 Blacktown Mayoral Creative Writing Prize

There are three ways to school. But there is only one way for me.

I do the same thing every morning, before I walk to school. Wake up. Wish I didn't have to. Eat breakfast. Wish I didn't have to. Give Mum her pills. Wish I didn't have to. Call goodbye to the office door. Wish I didn't have to. Then I walk to school.

Walking to school isn't so bad. At least I'm out of that house, haunted with lost dreams and memories. At least I don't have to watch Mum stare at the walls, or stare at the door that only opens when my dad decides he absolutely must eat. But most of all, at least I don't have to look at the door which will never open again.

Extract from
Ode to My Brown Body:
Sofia Saeed
Winner 13-15yr old category
Living Stories writing
competition.

Are we here yet?
*Yes, we are.
However, the true question
stands; are we seen, here.*

*My bones are the Himalayas.
Running through my spinal
cord to my tailbone is a rigid
range.*

*My flesh is the Thar Desert
Delicately veiling my skeleton
from any intruders strange*

*My blood is the Indus River
Replenishing and revitalising
me from any change*

Do you see me now?

*I am every immigrant's
dream.*

*I am the priceless wedding
gold they unwillingly sold*

*I am the rosy breath they
heaved their prayer with*

*Trying to regurgitate lines
like a wordsmith*

Can you hear me now?

*I am the word terrorist,
paki, curry muncher; shoved,
choked and smothered down
with the hand of assimilation*

*That was their ramification to
say THAT THEY MADE IT TO
THE NATION*

Can you hear me now?

*My Ammi's outstretched
palms offered me the crumbs
of my culture on a bent
silver spoon.*

But I refused.

*I bleached my culture,
dubbed my own language
ugly, only to look as pale as
the moon*

*But these palms didn't sway
in the breeze with these
coconut leaves*

*Nothing but a hollow husk
left trying to whistle the tune
of the thieves.*

Can you feel me now?



Digital WestWords



Mini-Masterclass

Workshops and masterclasses

As a result of the first round of COVID lockdowns in 2020 we ceased all our in-person public programming and in response we focussed on delivering digitally our workshops and masterclasses both via YouTube and as a podcast series. With audiences looking online in greater numbers, what we found was that our reach exponentially grew, attracting international audiences. In 2021 we now have a growing resource for writers and a showcase of the best writing from the region. Please also refer to online components of our children and young people’s program and the side columns for examples of our reach.

Mini-masterclasses podcast

Each of the ‘episodes’ of the mini-masterclass podcast series features a “bite-sized” conversation between WestWords program manager, James Roy, and a professional writer, poet, editor or one of the many professionals who work with and/or promoting literature. Focusing on different aspects of story, writing or the industry, some examples of topics covered are: creating characters; gathering ideas; beating writer’s block; world building; research; writing poetry, collaboration, publishing trends, the role of libraries, pitching work, marketing yourself and so on. Below are a selection of presenters and topics:

Deborah	Abela	<i>Hunting and Gathering Ideas</i>
Tim	Harris	<i>Plotting & Planning</i>
Leonie	Tyle	<i>The State of Play: Publishing Trends</i>
Rawah	Arja	<i>Characters from Personal Experience</i>
Amanda	Rose	<i>“It’s Just Business” Making the Most of Networking Tools</i>
James	Knight	<i>Non-Fiction - Bring Me the Angle</i>
Wai	Chim	<i>One Day This Will Make a Good Story</i>
John	Larkin	<i>Anger & Eloquence - Creating Tension</i>
Fiona	Wright	<i>I, Memoirist</i>
Erica	Wagner	<i>Pitching Your Work to a Publisher</i>
Catherine	Jinks	<i>Use of Language in Historical Fiction</i>
Melina	Marchetta	<i>Writing about Identity</i>
Emma	Sandham-O’Neill	<i>“Monkey-Fish Moments”: Interviewing for Biography</i>
Tim	Harris	<i>Setting</i>
Harry	Laing	<i>Poetry for Beginners</i>
James	Roy	<i>Short Stories</i>
Amelia	McInerney	<i>Writing Picture Books</i>
Deborah	Abela	<i>World Building</i>
Fiona	Murphy	<i>Feedback – What’s It Good For?</i>
Kirsty	Eager	<i>Page to Screen – Adapting for Film</i>
Scot	Gardner	<i>Finding Time and Place</i>
Laura	Greaves	<i>Ethical Historical Fiction</i>
Randa	Abdel-Fattah	<i>Writing with a Purpose</i>
Nardean		<i>Hip-Hop for Fun and Profit</i>
ali	whitelock	<i>The Barn-Fed Poet</i>
Tanya	Vavilova	<i>The Personal Essay</i>
Margaret	Hamilton	<i>Picture Books - A Publisher’s Perspective</i>
Malla	Nunn	<i>Crime Writing</i>
Michelle	Rickerby	<i>“Bring Good Biscuits” - Running Writing Groups</i>
James	Knight	<i>Books on Writing; Finding the Thread</i>
Lee	Castledine	<i>Storytelling</i>
Scot	Gardner	<i>Edgy Y.A. for Edgy Young Adults</i>
Hajer	Al-awsi	<i>“It’s More than Just Writing Words”: Career Skills for Writers</i>
Lowell	Tarling	<i>The Art of Ghostwriting</i>
Brooke	Robinson	<i>Writing for the Stage</i>
Isobelle	Carmody	<i>Reality as Fantasy</i>
Kirsty	Eager	<i>The Post-COVID Writer</i>
Belinda	Murrell	
Tsu-Ming	Teo	
James	Roy	<i>Resources 101: Pixar’s 22 Rules; Editing Pre-Editor; Tools of the Trade; Word Processing Options</i>

WESTWORDS WHAT IS LITERATURE DEVELOPMENT?

We develop **the writers:** giving writers at all stages of their careers, from pre-school onwards, strategic opportunities to develop their craft and the skills development to sustain their careers.

During 2021 we added 20 episodes to the library of mini-masterclasses, making a total of 48 masterclasses.



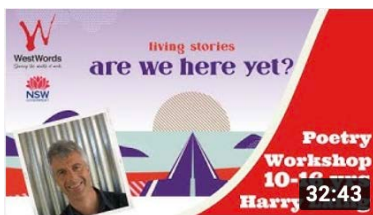
Extract from
The Infinite Sky: Blake Curran
Winner: Short Story Adult
Fisher's Ghost Writing Prize

Video workshops

For emerging writers and illustrators, and to complement the mini-masterclasses podcast series, we created online workshops made available on our YouTube channel WestWordsOFFICIAL. As part of the Western Sydney Emerging Writers Fellowship we mentored the fellows in how to create an effective online workshop from content to the associated technical considerations. As with all our digital content, the work created and shared online becomes part of the ever-expanding digital library.

Living Stories writing workshop 10-12yrs	Adam	Wallace
Living Stories writing workshop 13-15yrs	Rawah	Arja
Living Stories writing workshop 16-18yrs	Scot	Gardner
Living Stories writing workshop Adult	Luke	Johnson
Living Stories poetry workshop	Harry	Laing
Creative Writing workshop	Alexa	Moses
Wise Words with WS Emerging Writers Fellows: <i>Writing with Intention</i>	Kim	Pham
Wise Words with WS Emerging Writers Fellows: <i>Writing About You/Drawing You</i>	Vivian	Pham
Wise Words with WS Emerging Writers Fellows: <i>Biography</i>	Alaa	Alfaraon
	Emma	O'Neill - Sandham

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLb8bHCZBRMBiMpOu3hVB4qQnJnNLvFu6n>



Friday night's entertainment: beer and shouting and adrenaline and more beer and more shouting. Until it becomes physical. Violent. Insults shower down like rain, strength wielded like the relentless sun on a summer's long afternoon. Bruises blossom like flowers erupting from the soil.

A wife cowers beneath her husband's raised arm. Her world about to shatter.

Saved by a knock on the door. The husband grows. 'No funny business.'

A neighbourly smile, threaded through with concern, shines in the dimness of dusk.

A whispered offer of help, but what good is an old woman against the way things are? The way things have always been and will always be? The wife is angry at her neighbour for even suggesting such an idea. And who is she anyway to go meddling in other people's lives?

The door shuts, not quite a slam. For whatever reason, he's glued to the footy on the TV now and by the time she has a quick smoke out the back, he's asleep in the armchair, still clutching a nearly empty bottle of beer in a loose fist.

Taking the bins out one night, she stops to stare at the sky, stars barely twinkling through the light-polluted haze of towering streetlights and the yellow light from front windows and the occasional sweeping headlights of passing traffic. Still, the sheer infinity of it all is enough to take her breath away momentarily.



WestWords 2021 Publications

The publications WestWords produces are direct results from our programs. We invest in giving them the highest possible production values so they look like a book you might buy in a bookshop. We do this because the publications are a marker of the value we accord the contributors and their stories. This is particularly important in communities that are marginalised or low SES. The artwork is either commissioned or the work of the students. All are available digitally for free.

- **The Maren Depths - Stories from Blaxland High School** The book is divided into two halves. The stories of the first half explored the world the students had created with Catherine Jinks during her residency. The second half contains stories the students chose to write themselves showcasing their love of writing and the skills they had developed.

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/the-maren-depths-stories-from-blaxland-high-school/>

- **Our Community – A Meeting Place – A Collection of Writings from Kingswood Park Public School** showcases the work created by Stage 3 students over the course of five weeks with writer-in-residence Tamsin Janu. Jessica Farrell, a proud Dunghutti woman and the school’s Aboriginal Liaison Officer, painted the artworks that adorn the book.

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/our-community-a-meeting-place/>

- **Stepping Stones – Family and Connections: Change the World through Moments The Creative Writers Guild of The Ponds High School** During the course of the year we worked with students of the Guild in a number of programs including a residency with James Roy and a series of poetry workshops with ali whitelock. The publications brings together work emanating from these various encounters.

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/stepping-stones/>

- **Are We Here Yet?** is the publication showcasing winning and highly commended short stories, essays and poems from the inaugural Living Stories Western Sydney Writing Prize.

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/living-stories-publication-prize-announcement/>

- **Bright Circles: All as One** During the lockdown of terms 3 and 4 didn’t dampen the enthusiasm of the students of Bennett Road Public School’s Stage 2 enrichment class. The sessions with writer-in-residence Jodie McLeod took place mostly by zoom. The artwork for the publication was created by Jannine Richardson, a proud Wiradyuri/Ngunnawal woman and the school’s Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/bennett-road/>

- **Three Weeks in November** was the associated publication to a three-week residency program with 12 writers in November with the entire Year 10 cohort of Cherrybrook Technology High School of over 400 students.

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/three-weeks-in-november/>

- **The Blacktown Mayoral Creative Writing Prize 2021** was open to adults and children who live in Blacktown city. Entrants wrote a short story or poem responding to the theme of **The Only Way Is...** The publication showcases the winning and highly commend entries and special mentions from the Prize. A virtual awards ceremony was held on 3rd December by the Mayor of Blacktown, Cr. Tony Bleasdale. See:

<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/2021-mayoral-creative-writing-prize/>

- **Fisher’s Ghost Writing Prize 2021** was open to adults and children in Grade 4 and above who live in Campbelltown city. Entrants wrote a short story or poem responding to the theme of *Hiding in Plain Sight*. The publication showcases the winning and highly commend entries. See:

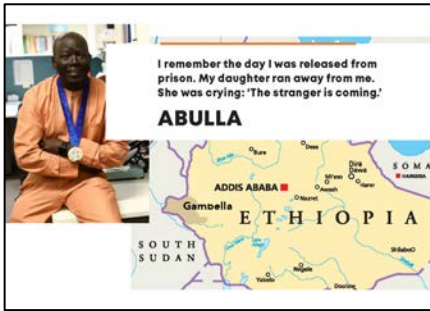
<https://www.westwords.com.au/projects/fishers-ghost-writing-prize-2021-2/>

WestWords’ school’s publication program is supported by the Australian Catholic University





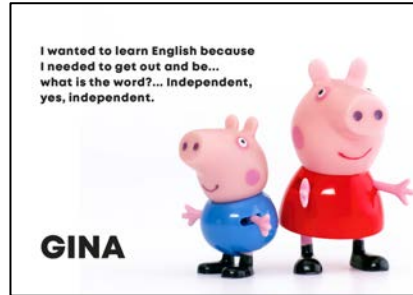
Postcard Project: Refugee Week 2021



To celebrate Refugee Week 2021, we partnered with MECA (Mt Druiett Ethnic Communities Agency) to bring the stories of six people (one couple) who came to Australia as refugees and are establishing their lives here. Each of the participants were interviewed by writer James Knight. James then distilled their stories to the fit onto the back of a postcard, creating ten stories. We edited the interviews, making them available via

podcast and via the QR code on the postcard. They are stories of survival and hope.

Also available via the link, WestWords producer James Roy chats with James Knight, who interviewed the six subjects, about his process behind identifying which parts of the stories to highlight for the postcards.



[CLICK HERE to read and hear the stories](#)

The project was launched on Monday 21st June at MECA, where those who attended enjoyed an African dance performance and readings from the postcards by the subjects themselves. Above are (L-R) Zainab Al-Jawad, Daniel Gobena (MECA manager), Clr Tony Bleasdale OAM (Mayor of Blacktown City), Mr Edmund Atalla MP (State Member for Mount Druiett), Rosemary Kariuki, Tahgreed Ramadhan, Gina Adjan, and Abulla Agwa.



Gina

I came to Australia in 2016. With my husband and three children. We left Syria because of the war.

I could only speak little bit of English. My language was Arabic and French. I went to TAFE to learn English, but the students spoke Arabic and explained to each other in Arabic. So, I looked for apps, and I watched Youtube videos. Then, a friend had a young girl. She told me about Peppa Pig. That is how I learnt many words. Daddy Pig, Mummy Pig, Peppa Pig, and George with his...what is it? A dragon? No, I do not know the word. A dinosaur? Yes, a little green dinosaur. It was funny. I liked them. Jumping in puddles.

I still speak Arabic and French because I talk with my mum twice a day. She is still in Syria. In Aleppo. I miss my mother.

But this is our new life, here in Sydney. We are safe.

I still watch Peppa Pig, but not every day.



Extract from
Revol-ocean: Emily
The Maren Depths: Stories
from Blaxland High School

The most frustrating thing about possessing a goat was how much they smelled. Yes, it was also an infuriatingly landish animal not suited to Sea People like Cyra, but the stench. Come on.

There were so many of them now that she didn't think there was a single goat left on the island that wasn't the vessel for a soul adrift.

Where else were they supposed to go? What other choice did they have but to seek out the weak-willed creatures that dawdled close to the shore? When your soul is ripped from your body and you have mere minutes to find a vessel, there is no time to be picky.

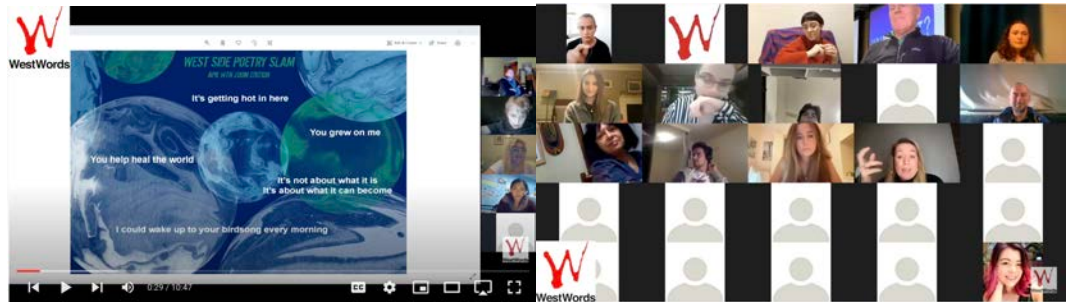


Digital WestWords: Sharing the Stories

Developing audiences for the written cultural expressions of Sydney's West allows the region to see itself and its experiences being reflected back to itself, and builds a complex, rich identity that reaches into those communities. Our programs also showcase some of Australia's best writers, providing access to these writers and to literature close to where audiences live and work.

West Side Slam

On the third Wednesday of the month we hosted the West Side Slam. It is co-convened by Defne Huzmeli and Melodie Grafton, who was a member of WestWords' Blacktown Writers' Group for six years throughout her high school years. It is an open mic night where, following the usual slam format, poets sign up on the night and perform/read an original piece of writing. Each month it was held as a live streamed event with edited highlights posted to our YouTube channel. The September slam was the Parramatta heat for the Australian Poetry Slam, run in conjunction with Word Travels Every slam also has a feature poet and over the course of the year has included featured poets: Ren Alessandra, Rosie Bee, Andrew Cox, Elena Garcia Araujo, Achala Green, Paul Kohn, Kathy Parker, Jordan Shaskey, Page Sinclair, Andi Stewart, Isaac Stott and Alinora Tame.



From our one live West Side Slam in February 2021

Poets' Corner

Poets' Corner is WestWords' monthly encounter with celebrated Australian poets, curated by David Adès. Each month a poet is invited to read and talk about their poetry on a theme of the poet's choice. The conversations are hosted on our YouTube channel WestWordsOFFICIAL. The conversations are also broadcast on our Podcast channel. The series is attracting significant national and international audiences. Featured in 2021 were: Ali Cobby Eckermann, Toby Fitch, Juan Garrido-Salgado, Phillip Hall, Anthony Lawrence, Rachael Mead, Damen O'Brien, Robyn Rowland and Michele Seminara.



WESTWORDS WHAT IS LITERATURE DEVELOPMENT?

We develop the audiences, creating the opportunities for audiences to experience the writing emanating from this unique region. We do this through showcasing writers and their works online, in publications and at events.



The WestWords podcast

The podcast is where you will get fortnightly news, interviews and featurettes showcasing and highlighting the work we do. Hosting the podcast is WestWords' producer and award-winning author, James Roy. Available on all the major podcast platforms.

WestWords on YouTube [WestWordsOFFICIAL:](#)

Writing Western Sydney: The Readings showcases the writers and writing of contemporary Australia, in particular focussing on writers from, and/or who work into Sydney's west – one of the world's most diverse regions and home to over 10% of Australia's population. Each video is the writer reading their own work. The richness and depth of the writing is always captivating, at times challenging, and reflective of the multi-faceted nature of human experience. We began the series in April 2020 as a response to COVID with COVID relief grant from Cultural Fund Copyright Australia but have continued the series as it is an important library of work that is engaging audiences nationally and internationally. In 2021 we added 44 readings bringing the digital library to 75.

2021 Writing Western Sydney: The Readings

Sienna Brown	<i>Historical Fiction</i>	Master of My Fate	Penguin
Sue Williams	<i>Historical Fiction</i>	Elizabeth & Elizabeth	Allen & Unwin
Helena Fox	<i>Fiction</i>	How It Feels To Float	Pan Macmillan
Malla Nunn	<i>YA</i>	When The Ground Is Hard	Allen & Unwin
Vivian Pham	<i>Fiction</i>	The Coconut Children	Penguin
Randa Abdel-Fattah	<i>Non fiction</i>	Coming of Age in the War on Terror	New South Publishing
Stuart Everly-Wilson	<i>Fiction</i>	Low Expectations	Text Publishing
Michael Adams	<i>Non fiction</i>	Australia's Sweetheart	Hachette
Chris Fleming	<i>Memoir</i>	On Drugs	Giramondo Publishing
Gary Lonesborough	<i>YA</i>	The Boy From the Mish	Allen & Unwin
Trevor Shearston	<i>Non fiction</i>	The Beach Caves	Scribe
Nardi Simpson	<i>Fiction</i>	Song of the Crocodile	Hachette
Fiona Murphy	<i>Memoir</i>	The Shape of Sound	Text Publishing
Alexa Moses	<i>YA</i>	Michaela Mason's Big List of 23 Worries	Scholastic
Alison Gibbs	<i>Fiction</i>	Repentance	Scribe
Emily Maguire	<i>Fiction</i>	Love Objects	Allen & Unwin
Claire Zorn	<i>YA</i>	When We Are Invisible	UQP
Meera Atkinson	<i>Non fiction</i>	Traumata	UQP
D.M. Cameron	<i>Fiction</i>	Beneath the Mother Tree	Midnight Sun Publishing
Nat Amoore	<i>YA</i>	The Right Way to Rock	Penguin
George Haddad	<i>Essay</i>	Second City	Giramondo Publishing
David Allan-Petale	<i>Fiction</i>	Locust Summer	Freemantle Press
Vanessa Berry	<i>Essay</i>	Gentle and Fierce	Giramondo Publishing
Gabrielle Tozer	<i>YA</i>	Can't Say it Went to Plan	HarperCollins
Amber Jakeman	<i>Fiction</i>	House of Diamonds	Lorikeet Press
Felicity Castagna	<i>YA</i>	Girls in Boys' Cars	Pan Macmillan
Sienna Brown	<i>YA</i>	Sugar Town Queens	Allen & Unwin
David Brooks	<i>Non fiction</i>	Animal Dreams	Sydney University Press
Luke Johnson	<i>Short story</i>	Ferocious Animals	Recent Work Press
Catherine Jinks	<i>Fiction</i>	The Attack	UQP
Pamela Freeman	<i>Children</i>	Dry to Dry	Walker Books
Peter Cochrane	<i>Fiction</i>	The Making of Martin Sparrow	Penguin
Phillip Gwynne	<i>YA</i>	The Break	Penguin
Jack Heath	<i>Children</i>	Kid President Totally Rules!	Scholastic
Angela O'Keefe	<i>Fiction</i>	Night Blue	Transit Lounge
Lisa Fuller	<i>Fiction</i>	Ghost Bird	UQP
Andrew Kwong	<i>Memoir</i>	One Bright Moon	HarperCollins
Kavita Bedford	<i>Fiction</i>	Friends & Dark Shapes	Text Publishing
Lucy Neave	<i>Fiction</i>	Believe in Me	UQP
Kate Liston-Mills	<i>Short story</i>	Dear Ibis	Spineless Wonders
M.A. Hughes	<i>Memoir</i>	Never Too Late to Tell: A Memoir	The Kind Press
Max Easton	<i>Fiction</i>	The Magpie Wing	Giramondo Publishing
Andy Jackson	<i>Poetry</i>	Human Looking	Giramondo Publishing
William Lane	<i>Fiction</i>	Past Life	Transit Lounge
Helen Meany	<i>Fiction</i>	Every Day is Gertie Day	Brio Books

In 2021 we added
44 readings
making a total of 75 in
the digital library

Blacktown City Libraries
are now linking their
digital catalogue to
these readings

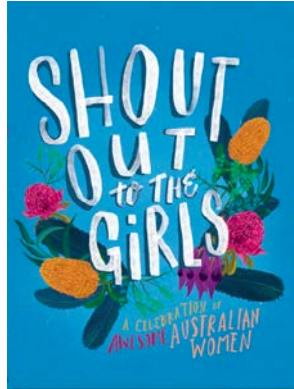
Writing Western Sydney is supported by

COPYRIGHTAGENCY
CULTURAL FUND



Touring exhibitions

We toured four exhibitions into libraries across Western Sydney and in Singleton during the first six months of the year.



Inspired by the children’s book **Shout Out to The Girls: A Celebration of Awesome Australian Women**

this exhibition showcases some of the beautiful artworks featured within the book; each illustration is created by Australian women, celebrating famous Australian female achievements. The exhibition toured to Stanhope Library, Blacktown.



Kathy Freeman by Tori-Jay Mordey, Kylie Kwong by Ngaio Parr,

Birds of a Feather: An Exhibition

is a celebration and expression of contemporary Iranian culture “Birds of a Feather demonstrates how illustration can be innovative and abstract at the same time as being approachable and engaging. In the hands of Iranian artists, illustration is decorative as well as narratively expressive.”



“...birds have been a fundamental component of Persian culture and philosophy for millennia. Birds of a Feather has become not just a thematic focus for a particular practice of contemporary illustration. It is also an expression of a unique cultural tradition. Representations of birds are not all that make Iranian illustration unique. There are more elusive elements at play. It is these elements that make Iranian illustrators among the most acclaimed in the world, and that infuse Iranian illustration with their mix of novelty and familiarity.” – Margrete Lamond, Curator,

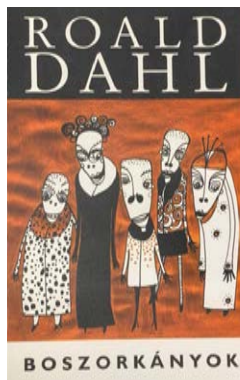
The exhibition toured to Hawkesbury Library

Birds of a Feather Birds of a Feather presented in collaboration with



Cover to Cover at Campbelltown City Library

Cover to Cover: Roald Dahl International Book Covers



Cover to Cover is a collection of Roald Dahl book covers from around the world, providing an insight into the different cultural perspectives on the same work. Cover to Cover was originally part of the 2017 Children’s Festival of Moving Stories presented in partnership with WestWords. It has toured across Western Sydney for now five years Over summer 2020/2021 the exhibition toured to Campbelltown City Libraries prior to transferring to Singleton Libraries.





Fundraising

COV-art 2 WestWords fundraising auction

In June we ran our **second annual** art auction. Facilitated by the generosity of 22 illustrators and the Oktion fundraising platform, 31 works were available online for people to bid on. Contributing illustrators: Alaa Alfaron, Jeannie Baker, Bronwyn Bancroft, Jonathan Bentley, Aaron Blabey, Martin Chatterton, Matt Cosgrove, Jennifer Goldsmith, Max Hamilton, Elizabeth Honey, Anne James, Sadami Konchi, Alison Lester, Paul McDermott, Andrew McLean, Matt Ottley, Emma Quay, Donna Rawlins, Thoby Riddle, Eloise Short, Mitch Vane and Leanne Mulgo Watson.

We raised \$7,485. Funds were directed to supporting our programs for children and young people.



Embedded by Dr. Bronwyn Bancroft, limited edition print on German Rag Paper

COV-art 2 was supported by Oktion, Digiground and Kathie Elliott

Booktober

There's lots of walks, runs and shaves for charity but now there's an event where you can stop, breathe and read a book.

We designed it to be really simple. Decide how many books you'll read during October, make that pledge, and encourage your friends and family to support you. Each person could opt-in to raise further funds to support WestWords to provide books and literary programs. Accompanying Booktober were suggested reading lists of contemporary Australian literature.

Booktober raised \$16,647 in donations from 102 individual donors.

<https://www.booktober.org.au>

Booktober was delivered with the support of Booktopia



Dave Wrote a Poem: Emma Hughes

Winner: Short Story Grades 10-12 Fisher's Ghost Writing Prize

Dave wrote a poem. It was a nice poem, lilting and softly dismal, one of those flowery pieces that I don't read but I am willing to listen to for the sake of a friend. He read it to me, his voice filled with the timbre of an old man. Told with authority, his voice followed the waves of inflection, intimately caressing every word with such a thorough understanding that it would absolve any doubt, if I even had any, about the authorship. He knew the poem. Like a father to a son, like a God to a man, like a writer to his pen.

Dave has written more recently, he's been writing like a dying man attending to his will, constantly writing, like his brain is a river rushing to the page. I suppose the fancies of lady inspiration have finally turned attention to him, fluttering her chocolate eyes at his whimsical imagination. If I didn't know better I'd say he was in love, for what else could play a man like a lute, only to have him holed up in a room, scribbling notes and typing verses for an art form that for the majority is dead.

*I was in a bowl.
I noticed a big fat cat across
the room. I screamed in my
head and started swimming
around in circles, but it
wasn't doing anything. I
was so confused, but then
the cat noticed me and
stared straight into my
puny heart and soul.*

*I forgot to introduce myself.
My name is Jamie, and I am
a goldfish. I have no
friends.*

Nerissa
from

*Our Community
– A Meeting Place:
A Collection of Short
Writings from Kingswood
Park Public School*



Treasurer's Report for YE 2021

As we navigated through the second year of a COVID-19 impacted environment, periodic lockdowns and other COVID restrictions impacted our business, particularly through the deferral of some core programmes or delivery away from 'in-person'.

Despite these challenges WestWords was able to achieve year on year revenue growth – primarily through the provision of project grants to support wages and other operating expenses. Key financial highlights include:

- Total revenue of \$609,477 which represented a 6% increase over 2020;
- A small operating surplus of \$3,655;
- Cash on deposit at balance date of \$148,426; and
- Net balance sheet equity of \$70,404

In relation to our balance sheet, there was increase in assets of approximately \$175,000 offset by a corresponding increase in liabilities. This change related to the accounting treatment of our new lease at Hunter Street Parramatta (signed in December 2021) in accordance with AASB16. This change had no impact on WestWords financial position.

WestWords secure financial position reflects both prudent and judicious decision making across both financial management of our affairs and responsive and agile programming.

In addition, during the year, WestWords continued to benefit from the Government's COVID relief packages.

We also acknowledge the generous support of the Campbelltown City Council by offering us premises at the Wedderburn Writers Retreat at a peppercorn rent during nearly all of 2021.

We also should acknowledge the contribution of our Executive Director who has effectively managed our financial position through another difficult year. During the year, Michael's leadership was recognised by WSABE when he was awarded the 2021 AAA City Removalist Outstanding Business Leader Award. We are all very proud of the great achievement.

Finally, the Board recognises that the programmes and the services delivered by WestWords rely on a small but dedicated team who are truly committed to our purpose. To maintain and grow our team and business, the funding from existing sources including corporate, philanthropic, individual donations, fund raising events and fee or service are all critical to our future success into 2022 and beyond.

Brett Perry



**Income and expenditure statements for
the year ending 31st December 2021**

Summary

INCOME		
	2021 \$	2020 \$
Operating grants	210,000	210,000
Project grants	226,419	198,608
Interest income	-	-
Membership subscriptions	-	-
Activity & services income	48,591	52,906
Other income	32,947	54,508
Donations	91,520	55,289
TOTAL	609,477	571,311
EXPENDITURE		
Marketing expenses	34,573	14,436
Occupancy costs	152	46,661
Administrative expenses	138,128	106,926
Artist fees	112,245	102,357
Other expenses inc. wages	320,724	274,118
TOTAL	(605,822)	(544,498)
Surplus before income tax	3,655	26,813
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus from continuing operations	3,655	26,813
Surplus for the year	3,655	26,813
Other comprehensive income, net of income tax		
Total comprehensive income for the year	3,655	26,813

**Statement of Financial Position for
the year ending 31st December 2021**

Total comprehensive income for the year	3,655	26,813
ASSETS		
Total current assets	183,481	214,141
Total non-current assets	173,806	-
Total assets	357,287	214,141
LIABILITIES		
Total current liabilities	151,633	146,309
Total non-current liabilities	135,250	1,083
Total liabilities	286,883	147,392
NET ASSETS	70,404	66,749

INCOME

From 2019 to 2021 income grew by \$89,221 being an 17.2% increase in revenue from 2019 totals.

**PROVIDING
EMPLOYMENT**

In 2021 we paid \$112,245 in fees to writers, illustrators, editors and allied artists, maintaining our year-on-year commitment to career sustainability for freelance artists.

Our Board

Libby Gleeson AM Chair

Libby is author of forty titles for children and young adults. She is formerly Chair of the Australian Society of Authors, Chair of the Literature and History Committee of ArtsNSW, a Director of the Copyright Agency and recently stepped down as a Director of the Public Education Foundation.

Prof. Robyn Ewing AM Deputy Chair

Robyn is Professor Emerita, Teacher Education and the Arts, Sydney School of Education and Social Work and Co-Director of the Creative Research, Engaging the Arts, Transforming Education (CREATE) Centre, University of Sydney. A former primary teacher, Robyn is passionate about the role that quality arts experiences and processes can and should play in our lives and learning. She is a past president of the Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) and the Primary English Teachers Association (PETAA) (2001-2006) and a former Council Member and Chair of the Academic Board of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS). Robyn has worked in partnership with Sydney Theatre Company on the School Drama teacher professional learning program since 2009 and is an Honorary Associate with Sydney Theatre Company.

Janice Lee Co-Treasurer

Janice is Partner, Integrated Infrastructure, Infrastructure Advisory - Strategy & Planning, PwC. She brings 18 years of advising state and federal governments on social and economic policy, including on tackling disadvantage and promoting economic development. She worked as a policy adviser to the Australian Treasurer and Federal Infrastructure Minister, and in the NSW Cabinet Office, former Australian Head of Government Practice at L.E.K. Consulting and a former Director in Economics and Public Policy at EY.

Brett Perry Co-Treasurer

Brett has 40 years experience in the banking industry. He joined The Commonwealth Bank of Australia in 1990. Throughout his career, Brett has worked in various roles, including Institutional Banking, Project Finance, State Manager Business Banking Qld and National Manager Corporate Risk Management.

Eyob Yesus

Eyob is the sole director of Icon Corporate Events. With a career spanning more than 15 years in the events and entertainment industry, Eyob works closely with corporates, non for profits and charities to deliver creative events to bring “their brand to life”. Organiser and event manager inc: Official event partner for the Sydney Hills Business Chamber – 5 years and current, Official event partner for Positive Vibes Foundation 2019 and current.

Vivienne Skinner

Vivienne is a Professional/Industry Fellow in the School of Built Environment at the University of Technology Sydney and Principal of the urban strategy company Metropolis. For nearly two decades she was an adviser and speechwriter to two NSW premiers and the deputy prime minister of Australia.

Vivienne has been a television newsreader and journalist and is a member of *The Big Issue Women’s Advisory Committee*. Her former board appointments include the Centennial Parklands and Moore Park Trust, chair of the Centennial Parklands’ Community Consultative Committee, deputy Chair of the Adelaide Film Festival, the South Australian Film Corporation, Beyond Empathy and the physical theatre company, Legs on the Wall. She sits on the Community Consultative Committee for the construction of the Sydney Football Stadium and is Vice-President of Saving Moore Park. Vivienne has a Masters degree in Urban Policy and Strategy from UNSW and a Bachelor of Arts from the Australian National University.

Lucy Brotherton

Lucy is a Community Capacity Building Officer, Social Investment at the City of Parramatta. In her role in Council, Lucy implements and facilitates a range of social investment activities in the Parramatta Local Government Area. These activities use innovative approaches to create positive and sustainable social change in the community. Lucy also has extensive experience in State Government engaged within policy development, project management and strategic planning.

Jasmine Seymour

Jasmine is a Dharug woman, artist and writer and a member of the Dharug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. Her books *Baby Business* and *Cooee Mitigar: A Story on Dharug Songlines* (co-authored with Leanne Watson) Magabala Books 2019. *Cooee Mitigar* won the 2020 Prime Minister’s Literary Award, Children’s Literature. She is also a library teacher at Riverstone Public School.

Jacqueline D’Warte

Jacqueline has 15 years of K-12 teaching experience in Australia, the UK, and India. She began her career as an elementary school teacher teaching a range of grades and specialising in ESL and literacy development. Jacqueline has written and edited literacy materials for inclusion in professional development packages and curriculum documents for Australian Public Schools in NSW. Jacqueline has been a lecturer at the University of California, Irvine and at the University of California, Los Angeles and was involved in both, curriculum and staff development in the U.S., working on a variety of interdisciplinary language and literacy projects. Jacqueline was involved in training and scoring performance assessments for Californian Teachers and working on large-scale research projects. Jacqueline also had a continuing role as a literacy consultant for the New York City Public Schools. She is currently Senior Lecturer in English/Literacy/ESL Curriculum and Pedagogy, K-6. Primary Education in the School of Education at Western Sydney University.



Our Staff

Michael Campbell: Executive Director

With over 35 years of experience Michael has worked as CEO, Artistic Director, an arts consultant and strategist, artistic co-ordinator, producer, events manager, librettist, editor, writer, events manager, director, choreographer and dancer. He was the Festival Director for the Brisbane Writers Festival (2006-2009). He is a former Chair of Currency House, and of its Editorial Committee, and edited *Keith Bain on Movement* and *Keith Bain: The Principles of Movement* for Currency House and Oberon Books (UK). He was a principal dancer with West Australian Ballet, Queensland Ballet and Oper der Stadt Köln, and has worked for companies including Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare Company, Griffin Theatre Company and for Opera Australia on numerous works over a 19 year period. In 2004 he directed the opera *Madeline Lee*, which he also co-wrote, and was nominated for seven Helpmann Awards. The work was restaged by State Opera of South Australia in 2019.

In 2018 he served on the Creative Arts and Humanities panel for Australia Research Council's inaugural Engagement and Impact Assessment. In August 2019 Michael was appointed to the inaugural Create NSW Artform Literature Advisory Board. Michael won the 2021 Excellence in Business Leadership Award in the Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence.

Christian Pazzaglia: Digital Producer

Christian has been a multidisciplinary curator, artistic director and producer working in Amsterdam and internationally for the past seventeen years. He has created exhibitions, public programs, activations and special events for some of the leading cultural institutions in the Netherlands, including the International Amsterdam Documentary Film Festival (IDFA), Dutch Film Institute (EYE), Van Gogh Museum, Goethe-Institut and Alliance Française. He has also produced feature films and documentaries and, more recently, VR experiences. Christian moved to Australia at the end of 2016 and has since collaborated with cultural institutions such as Goethe-Institut, and the Italian Cultural Institute.

Kathie Elliott: Business Development

Kathie brings over 20 years' experience in business development, marketing and management to WestWords. In 2002 she moved to Australia after a career in NZ as a professional dancer and worked in the recruitment industry for over eight years specialising in the industrial, community/not for profit, resource and transport/ logistics sectors. Changing paths, she went on to managing corporate and community partnerships for two large Australian charities, negotiating significant social responsibility programs with various ASX listed organisations, and delivering community education programs state-wide. She has been a Director on the boards of Anywhere Theatre Festival, Australian Pain Management Association, chair of Supercell Dance Festival and was part of the management committee for the 139 Club – a homeless drop-in centre. Seeing a gap in the NFP sector for smaller organisations to allocate time and resources to sourcing partnerships and funding, Kathie decided to form her own consultancy, Square Pegs. She is passionate about assisting small to medium arts, social justice and disability organisations source extra funding, sustainability, diversification, and support for their programs through establishing mutually beneficial partnerships, generating revenue and raising their profiles through targeted campaigns and advocacy work.

Sheryl Cootes

Sheryl has been teaching for over thirty years in schools in the Blue Mountains and western Sydney areas. She has been teacher, Assistant Principal and Relieving Principal at Department of Education schools, most recently in the role of Assistant Principal at Bidwill PS, mentoring inexperienced teachers in the use of literature in the classroom and establishing a culture of 'reading for pleasure' among students. She is a recipient of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Australian College of Education Award for Outstanding Achievement. Sheryl is passionate about engaging students with children's literature and has actively promoted and developed literature resources in all schools at which she worked. Sheryl is currently President of the Blue Mountains sub-branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia (NSW branch), a position she has held since 2015. She has established ten Little Free Libraries providing access to quality children's literature for the broader community. As President of the sub-branch, she has been instrumental in conducting literary dinners and children's activities in conjunction with Blue Mountains City library and local authors and illustrators. Sheryl is a judge for the Eve Pownall Award for the CBCA Book of the Year for 2021-2023.

James Roy: Producer

James Roy was born in western New South Wales and spent much of his childhood in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, adventuring by day and reading books at night. Then one day, tired of reading books by dead people, he decided to start writing his own. Since his first novel was released in 1996, James has written 35 critically acclaimed works of fiction and nonfiction for young people. These include the CBCA Honour Books *Captain Mack and Billy Mack's War*, and six CBCA Notable Books. In 2008, *Town* also won the Ethel Turner Prize for Young People's Literature in the NSW Premier Literary Awards, as well as the Golden Inky in Australia's only teenage choice awards. *Anonymity Jones* won the 2010 Western Australian Premier's Book Award for young adult literature. His latest book *One Thousand Hills*, written with Noel Zihabamwe won the NSW Premier Literary Award and a NSW Premier's History Award.

Christine Donoghue: Associate Producer

Christina is a graduate several times over from the University of Wollongong with degrees in Journalism, Creative Writing and Creative Arts. Her research area is in decolonial theory and the framing of the African Diasporic voice in Australian Contemporary Literature. She is a practising multidisciplinary artist who has published poetry in the Cordite Poetry Review. Christina recently completed her first poetry collection that dissects the development of identity for a Black child growing up between Australia and Tennessee USA. She is also the Project Officer: TWZ at Writing and Society Research Centre, Western Sydney University.

Bookkeeper: Chris Adams



WestWords

Sharing the wealth of words

Western Sydney's Literature Development Organisation

In 2021, we partnered with 70 organisations, of which three were universities, 13 were schools and 22 were publishers. These companies, government agencies, trusts and foundations, arts organisations, libraries, museums and community organisations share in our fundamental belief in the power of the written word to shape lives and communities. We welcome our new supporters and acknowledge the ongoing relationships with those who have been with us over years.

Together we change lives and bring about social cohesion.

On behalf of all those who participated in, and were touched by, our programs – thank you.

PARTNERS

We worked with:
70 organisations

including
3 universities
and
13 primary and secondary schools

Our major partners:



Create NSW
Arts, Screen & Culture



Blacktown
City Council



CAMPBELLTOWN

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CULTURAL FUND



Our community and arts partners include:

- African Australian Advocacy Centre
- Aurora Foundation
- Blacktown City Libraries
- Bell Shakespeare Company
- Booktopia
- Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre
- City of Parramatta Library
- Adès Family Foundation
- Digiground
- Dirt Lane Press
- Giramondo Publishing
- Liverpool City Council
- Liverpool City Library
- Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Centre
- Oktion
- Penrith City Council
- Pinerolo: The Children's Book Cottage
- Sailor Studio
- Singleton Library
- Sydney Living Museums
- Sydney Review of Books
- Taurus Marketing
- The Kindness Pandemic
- The Whitlam Institute
- University of Sydney
- Varuna: The National Writers' House
- WestLit Libraries: Public Libraries Association NSW, Western Zone Public Libraries
- Western Sydney University
- Word Travels

Our 22 publishing partners that support our showcase programming

The 13 schools who partner with us on our schools' programs

And our individual donors including

Rachael Evans, Robyn Ewing AM, Libby Gleeson AM, Vivienne Skinner, Kathie Elliott

We couldn't do it without you!

WestWords

ABN 60 603 106 136

Parramatta • Blacktown • Campbelltown • PO Box 3708 Parramatta NSW 2124

T 1800 937 896 E admin@westwords.com.au W www.westwords.com.au



In 2021, we collaborated with 152 writers, illustrators, editors, actors, spoken word artists, and other allied artists. These extraordinary individuals included:

- Randa Abdel-Fattah
- Deborah Abela
- Michael Adams
- David Adès
- Alaa Alfaraon
- Aishah Ali
- Justin Amankwah
- Nat Amoor
- Rawah Arja
- Ayeesha Ash
- Peter Bakowski
- Kavita Bedford
- Sienna Brown
- Isobelle Carmody
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- Alison Fraser
- Pamela Freeman
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- Scot Gardner
- Zoe Ghani
- Alison Gibbes
- Erin Gough
- Laura Greaves
- Phillip Gwynne
- Michelle Hamadache
- Nix Hamilton
- Tim Harris
- Jack Heath
- Jacqueline Hervey
- Chloe Higgins
- Simone Howell
- Tamsin Janu
- Gareth Jenkins
- Catherine Jinks
- Luke Johnson
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- Will Kostakis
- John Larkin
- Anthony Lawrence
- Gary Lonesborough
- Emily McGuire
- Melina Marchetta
- Oluwanifemi Temitayo Maxwell
- Miles Merrill
- Alexa Moses
- Fiona Murphy
- Belinda Murrell
- Nathaniel O'Reilly
- Kristina Olsson
- Ben Peek
- Catherine Pelosi
- Kim Pham
- Vivian Pham
- Oliver Phommavanh
- Wilfred Roach
- James Roy
- Randa Sayed
- Kristina Schulz
- Jasmine Seymour
- Nardi Simpson
- Alex Skovron
- Michel Streich
- Hsu-Ming Teo
- Adam Turner
- Leanne Mulgo Watson
- Julie Watts
- Vivian Wei
- ali whitelock
- Campbell Whyte
- Fiona Wright
- *and more...*

PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT

152 professional writers, illustrators, editors and other allied artists facilitated our programs

64%
came from Western Sydney

This is a 16% increase on the number of artists we collaborated with, and employed, in 2020.