

**HUNTER  
WRITERS  
CENTRE**



## 2021 Annual Report



## Acknowledgement of Country

Hunter Writers Centre is located on Awabakal land. We acknowledge the Awabakal, Darkinjung, Wonnarua and Worimi people as the Traditional Custodians of the region in which we work and write.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise Elders of those communities who are the holders of our Nation's oldest culture and stories; as the original storytellers of this place and we celebrate the important role of First Nations writers in guiding our collective future.

## Our Vision

We nurture, empower, and amplify the writing and storytelling culture of the Hunter Region - a guiding light for collaboration amongst writers and visual storytellers.

## Our Values

### Inclusion

We promote a diverse, inclusive and culturally safe arts and cultural sector which dispels bias and builds respect, trust and tolerance.

### Advocacy

We pride ourselves on brokering a range of opportunities for writers and other creatives.

### Innovation

Our programs and services invigorate the local and national artistic community in ways that are new, different, inspiring and challenging.

### Resilience

We will learn from the past and transition to the new future.

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## About us

Hunter Writers Centre was established in 1995 and is a not for profit membership organisation, incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW); is a Registered Charity governed by a Board of Management, in accordance with its Rules, and delegates the daily operations of the organisation to a Director.

Hunter Writers Centre generates income through membership fees, ticket and book sales, competition and fee for service activities and its core programs are supported through annual funding from the Government of New South Wales thanks to Create NSW.

The Hunter Writers Centre has been the recipient of grants from partners such as Create NSW, the City of Newcastle, and the University of Newcastle, and has gratefully received pro bono and in-kind support from numerous entities, businesses, and individuals.

We work tirelessly to engage, educate, and employ aspiring and established writers and other creatives in the Hunter Region of New South Wales and nationally throughout Australia.

Hunter Writers Centre is an arts organisation supported by a shared vision, strong membership base, and an engaged organisational culture. We have a reputation for being a leader in delivering a vibrant, active, and contemporary range of activities that promote writing excellence in Australia, specifically in the Hunter Region of New South Wales. Building upon the Centre's success to date, we continue to maintain and grow our region's writing diversity and talent which is reflected in our community engagement, artist and audience development, and our commitment to high calibre programming and practices.

Hunter Writers Centre is unique in the diversity of our members and artists who come from all ages, backgrounds, locations, and cultures. Many face disabilities and barriers to full participation in our society. HWC is committed to supporting all writers in the tradition of storytelling, and fresh, innovative literary outputs.

# Chapter One - Overview

## Our People

### Staff

Karen Crofts	Director
Jasmine Sullivan	Administration
Eleni Miskin	Retail
Jacqueline Williams	Bookkeeper
Judy Johnson	Consultant / Operations
Helen MacKenzie	Volunteer since 2013

### Board

Nick Stabler	Acting Chair
Karly Zacharia	Secretary
Marcus Rodrigs	Treasurer
Mark Lock	Board Member

## Our Supporters



# Chapter Two - Governance

HWC has continued its standing activities, including:

- Governance and operational practices
- Employee resources
- Ongoing partnerships with grant funding bodies
- Fundraising / sponsorship activities as appropriate

## Structure and Management



# Chapter Three - Objectives and Activities

Members - Servicing HWC Members with diverse programs across the Hunter region  
(Strategic Plan 2022-2025)

Our members are at the heart of the Hunter Writers Centre. With offerings of a variety of writing groups, resources, courses, and publishing opportunities, Hunter Writers Centre membership grew in 2021 from 285 to 330 Members despite the impact of Covid.

## Workshops

A total of 9 workshops were delivered either in person or online in 2021 and were well attended.

- Pamela Freeman delivered a fascinating *Character Development* workshop
- HWC member Graham Davidson shared his wisdom and expertise in the *Self-Publishing* workshop.
- Hilary Bell presented a successful high quality *Playwriting* workshop.
- HWC member, Diana Pearce, presented a well-received 4-week creative writing course.
- Lesley Gibbes' *Writing for Children* workshop in June was booked out.
- Justine Ettler's workshop *Writing Other Worlds* successfully moved online (due to Covid) and was booked out.

## Writing Groups

The year began well with Writing Groups and folks adjusted to COVID lockdowns. Zoom fatigue affected some members and managing isolation became challenging as the year progressed. We are so grateful to the facilitators for their hard work through these difficult times: Nicole Sellers of Belmont Writing Group, Megan Buxton of East Maitland writing group, Graham Davidson of Maitland writing group, Katrina McKelvey with the Children's writing group (8 years in 2021!), Kathryn Fry with Newcastle Poetry Group, Diana Pearce of East Maitland Poets, Rebecca Pearson who kick-started Wickham Writers, and Bev Murrill who tried to get the West Lake Writing Group going but COVID impacted too greatly on its continuation.

Liv Hamilton established a new writing group, 'Diverse Universe', providing an inclusive virtual space for authors of diverse backgrounds and experiences writing speculative fiction (sci-fi, fantasy, dystopia, horror). The Online writing group, estd by HWC Director in 2020 in response to the pandemic, continued in 2021 ably hosted by David-Jack Fletcher, who also took over hosting the Speculative Fiction Writers group.

Congratulations also to Graham Davidson for establishing a new publishing venture *Rack and Rune*, and Megan Buxton who represented HWC as a judge of the Newcastle Herald Short Story Competition.

Throughout the year we kept our members engaged and writing despite Covid lockdowns, through initiatives such as promoting members' work, skills and literary successes plus regular members-only

writing contests which resulted in a great response from members and some beautiful works written and published on the Hunter Writers Centre website.

The Lighthouse Arts Program has been an additional and welcome benefit for HWC members affected by Covid who were prioritized for residencies in the cottages of Nobbys-Whibayganba headland in Round One and Two.

## Mentoring

Hunter Writers Centre offered 2 mentorships during 2021 to Grant Palmer and Diana Pearce:

*“I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to work with Ross Gillett as mentor. It has been a most rewarding program for me; to have the insight of an experienced poet has given me another way of looking at my poems.”* Diana Pearce

## Programs Prioritising Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

**(Strategic Plan 2022-2025)**

Hunter Writers Centre prioritises equity, diversity and inclusion in developing, delivering and promoting all its programs. There are numerous writers and storytellers across the region who experience barriers to participation, therefore through our consultation and employment processes, we identify and employ writers living with disability, young people and people who are Aboriginal and Torres Islander for projects, access/inclusion advice and leadership.

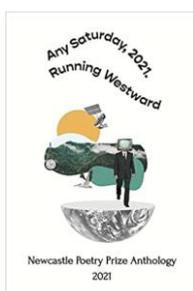
People who are culturally and linguistically diverse are also now accessing storytelling programs through Lighthouse Arts and its partnership with the Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre (MCNC).

Paying writers/artists award wages has been a high priority for Hunter Writers Centre: HWC paid \$85,000 to writers, typesetters, editors, publishers, illustrators, digital experts, and other creatives and storytellers in 2021, compared to \$39,000 in 2020.

## Capture the Voices and Stories of Our Region **(Strategic Plan 2022-2025)**

Hunter Writers Centre publishes the best of Australian writing: annual anthologies of the best of Australian poets, writers, essayists.

## National Writing Competitions, Awards and Publications



### **Newcastle Short Story Award - April**

Newcastle Short Story Award first prize winner and Hunter Writers Centre Member Lucy Nelson featured in the anthology which was published, printed and available on Amazon and Booktopia. The online announcement of longlist and prizewinners received positive feedback from writers around Australia.

### **Grieve - May**

The Grieve project continues to receive support and positive feedback from entrants and the funeral/health/palliative care sector alike. The Grieve e-book 2020 Vol 8 was published early May – the ebook of the previous year’s print version. Grieve vol 9 was published in line with the announcement of the long and short list.

### **Newcastle Poetry Prize - June**

Entries opened on 21 March (World Poetry Day) and final selection by the judges Toby Fitch and Jill Jones included ‘experimental’ poetry, some of which won prizes. The judges professionalism and expertise were acknowledged in the online prize ceremony attended by Prof Catherine Coleborne, the 3 daughters of Harri Jones (prize for a poet under 36 years) plus over 70 audience members. We received much positive feedback about the ceremony. All anthologies are available on the Hunter Writers Centre website.

*I'm immensely thankful to the judges, Associate Professor Jill Jones and Dr Toby Fitch, for their openness to experimentation, to strange poetic explorations, and to contemporary experiences from regional Australia. Poetry is a vital part of Australian culture, the fabric of life, the possibilities for political transformation. I hope that poetry can continue to run its fingers over the big and small questions of existence in surprising ways. The Newcastle Poetry Prize (now in its 40th year) is a testament to The University of Newcastle's ongoing support for poetry and creative arts. Regional Universities are vital for the cultural health of their communities, they trade in global and local ideas, bringing the best of Australia to the world. 40 years of this prize demonstrates the richness of Australia's poetic practice, and the support of the University of Newcastle has allowed this to continue and thrive.*

- Lachlan Brown, 2021 First Prize Winner

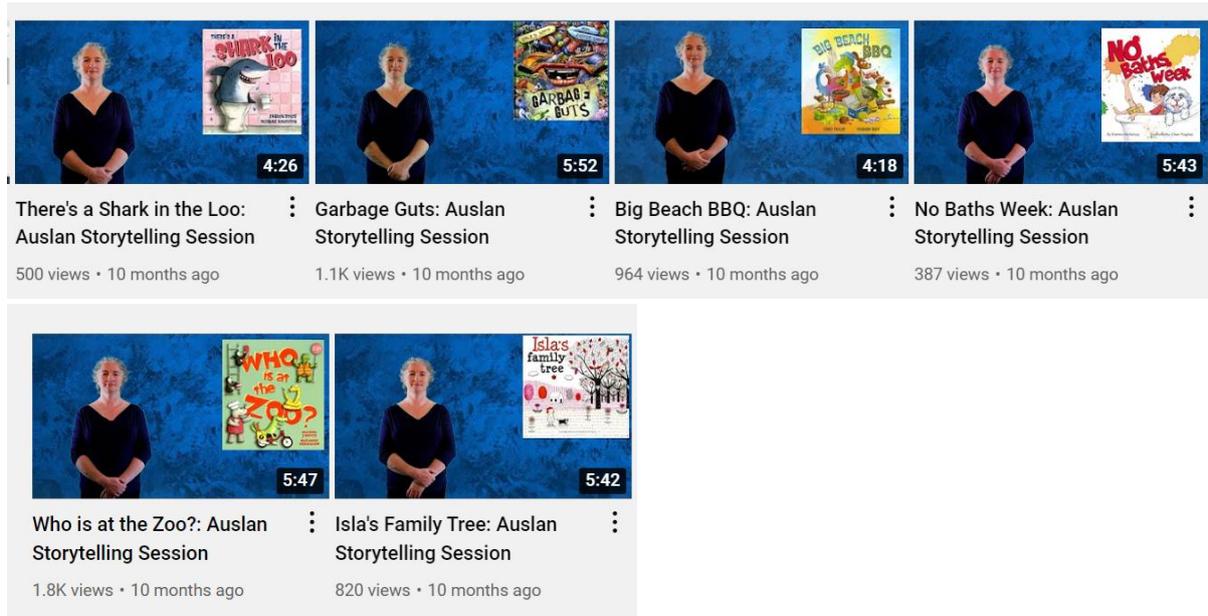
## **Lead Arts and Culture in Australia (Strategic Plan 2022-2025)**

In 2021 Hunter Writers Centre provided unique opportunities to and support of regional literary events: we provided funding to the Maitland Indie Festival (IF); and supported and promoted the Emerging Writers’ Festival and the History Illuminated Festival with Lake Macquarie Libraries.

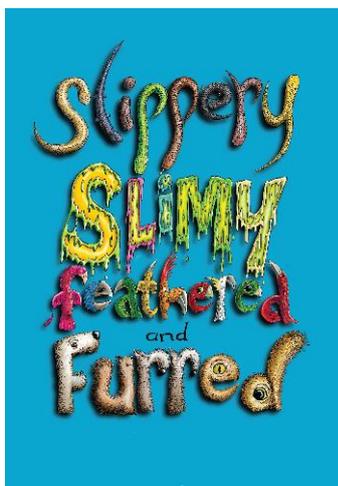
The team who present IF Maitland do wonderful work, notably HWC members Graham Davidson and Gillian Swain. HWC also funded the artists of Heart Open - lead by HWC member and local media influencer Alex Morris - in delivering two well attended and successful events: one during the Hunter Innovation Festival and the Drag King Show held at Adamstown. Heart Open celebrates creativity and creative women and female identifying creatives. HWC funded all the featured artists, demonstrating our commitment to inclusive programs for diverse audiences and storytellers.

## COVID-Recovery: Digital, Hybrid, Collaborative (Strategic Plan 2022-2025)

Create NSW awarded two one-off Covid Recovery grants to HWC in 2021. Based on consultation, we developed and published a series of videos featuring HWC members children's books narrated in Auslan. Members Katrina McKelvey, Carly Taylor, Emily S. Smith, Sharon Boyce had 6 of their published books Auslan signed by Darlene Thornton with accompanying audio readings. The number of views for each reading is shown below:



A series of podcasts as part of Grieve were also developed and published featuring HWC members. Grieve Audio is a series of conversations and prepared talks by experts in the grief and loss industry as well as writers: <https://hunterwriterscentre.org/grieve-audio/>



HWC coordinated the compilation, editing, production and publication of an anthology of work featuring work by 14 Hunter writers and 16 Hunter illustrators entitled Slippery Slimy Feathered and Furred. The stories for children aged 7-12 years sought to raise awareness about the challenges facing specific fauna of the Hunter region, through a focus on individual animals for each chapter. This anthology revealed environmental impacts such as bushfires, drought, roadside injuries, deforestation, river and ocean health on Hunter region species, with relevance to Australia and worldwide.

Over 100 copies have been purchased by wildlife parks, zoos, animal farms around Australia.

# Support the region's unique Arts, Culture and Tourism

(Strategic Plan 2022-2025)

## Lighthouse Arts on Nobbys-Whibayganba headland

### Timeline of Lighthouse Arts from concept to opening:

**July 2020:** first conversations with Port Authority NSW and application for City Taskforce grant.

**Aug-Dec 2020:** weekly meetings with PANSW and prep of licence agreement, development application, Heritage NSW application

### January 2021:

- Licence agreement signed with PANSW.
- Presentation City of Newcastle Industry Response Grant City Taskforce – 17 CEOs, Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor
- Ongoing meetings and engaged with the Aboriginal community
- Regular meeting with arts leaders and establishment of the Lighthouse Arts Project Team
- Preliminary meetings with people living with disability and networks
- Commencement of DGR application status for HWC.

**8 March:** Development Application submitted to City of Newcastle.

**June 2021:** Submission to Heritage NSW

**1 August:** Consent to Occupy and keys handover

**5 August:** Lockdown of NSW

**Aug-Nov** (during lockdown)

- WHS assessment and manual completed.
- First Nations engagement: HWC director and Dr Bill Pascoe were invited to a long meet up on Mount Sugarloaf with Awabakal descendants with the view to listening and understanding, on Country.
- Consultation with people living with Disability: Lindsay Perry, Access Architect, audited the site to guide our Disability Action Plan.
- October: successful Creative Capital grant application submitted (\$85,000 - \$105,000) to make cottages accessibility compliant (ramps, decks railings) and to provide sanitary facility for visitors, creatives and staff. Despite HWC Treasurer's fundraising efforts, no uptake on gap of \$20,000. This remains outstanding.

**November:** first artists-in-residence commenced weekday 6-week round.

38 Artists participated in the sought-after residencies one day/week in Round One.

<https://www.instagram.com/lighthouseartsnewcastle/>

**December:** Arts Trading Store opens weekends

**5 November:** The Lord Mayor officially opened Lighthouse Arts on Nobbys-Whibayganba. Deputy Lord Mayor, Sally Davies from Jenkins Legal Services, Marcus Rodrigs and Mark Lock from HWC board attended. Mark delivered the Acknowledgement of Country, speeches from the Lord Mayor and HWC Director.

**30 November:** Tim Crakanthorp MP impressed with VIP tour of site

HWC member Judy Johnson blogged about her recent residency: [Judy Johnson – Lighthouse Arts](#)

<https://www.instagram.com/lighthouseartsnewcastle/>

<https://www.facebook.com/LighthouseArtsNewcastle>

## Chapter Four - Our Finances

### Treasurer's report

Attached/appendix One

### Auditor's statement

Attached/appendix Two

### Financial statements

Attached/appendix Three

## Chapter Five - Other Important Information

### Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of you who have developed, worked on and shared your stories and also to those who have supported and encouraged others to share their stories.

Storytelling is the oldest form of knowledge sharing. HWC is honored to be a safe place for so many emerging and established storytellers of the Hunter region. KC

### How you can help?

HWC now has Deductible Gift Recipient status, which means you can make a donation to our organisation and it's tax deductible, each year. We would love to build on the generosity of our members and others. So, if you appreciate what we do, please support us to continue to deliver the unique storytelling opportunities and programs offered by HWC and Lighthouse Arts.

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