



15 Years

Annual Report



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

2025

The Wheeler Centre acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Centre stands. We also acknowledge and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Elders, past and present, as the custodians of the world's oldest continuous living culture.

COVER IMAGE: Audiences at Melbourne Town Hall for The Mushroom Tapes: Conversations about a Triple Murder Trial, 10 November 2025. Photo: Shannyn Higgins.

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Who We Are

The Wheeler Centre is a unique and vibrant gathering place that draws together leading and surprising voices to deliver thought-provoking live events and conversations. We are proudly based in Melbourne, but our impact goes beyond the city. We present events throughout Victoria, working with authors and thinkers nationally and internationally and our digital audiences engage from around the world.

The work we do celebrates Victoria's love of storytelling and debate and elevates Melbourne's status as Australia's original UNESCO City of Literature. We support writers at every stage of their careers and support the work of the literary organisations that share our building.

Our Purpose

The Wheeler Centre exists to honour and amplify the culture of ideas, stories and debate that has existed in Victoria for millennia. We serve writers, storytellers, thinkers, readers, listeners – the diverse ecology of people, communities and cultures that keep ideas alive and evolving.

Our Vision

Our vision is to be a globally renowned home for storytelling and ideas that is sought after and celebrated by writers, readers, speakers, listeners and decision-makers.

Our Mission

To connect, support and promote Victoria's unique culture of writing, storytelling and ideas. We seek to open up writing, reading, storytelling and inclusive public discussion to everyone, everywhere and in doing this, we also elevate Melbourne's status as Australia's original UNESCO City of Literature.

From left to right: The Wheeler Centre Chair Kate Torney, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC and The Wheeler Centre CEO Erin Vincent at The Wheeler Centre's 15th Anniversary Morning Tea at Government House.





‘These endless possibilities offered by fiction remind us of a really important truth. More important now, perhaps, than at any other time. And that is, that it’s all a story. It’s all a work in progress. That life isn’t fixed. Outcomes themselves are not fixed. That society progresses and changes because we change the story that we’re telling – about ourselves, about the way we live, about who we want to be. And that really matters.’

**Jeanette Winterson:
Forty Years of Storytelling**

A Message from Our Chair, Kate Torney OAM



Having a Centre that is dedicated to sharing stories and supporting the free exchange of ideas feels more vital than ever.

We were reminded of this in 2025, a milestone year marking 15 years of The Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas and it was a great privilege to celebrate this with our community.

The year was filled with the kind of conversations only The Wheeler Centre can deliver – celebrating stories, interrogating ideas and responding to the events that shape our national identity.

The programming achievements of the past year were made possible thanks to the talent and creativity of The Wheeler Centre team who work with such dedication and passion; the vibrancy of our literary sector; the curiosity and enthusiasm of audiences, old and new; and importantly, the vision of our donor community and partners.

Sincere thanks to Maureen and Tony Wheeler for their enduring ambition for The Wheeler Centre and for their ongoing generosity through support for our matched giving campaign.

I would like to thank the Minister for Creative Industries, the Hon. Colin Brooks and the Creative Victoria team for their continued support, and for their vision they have shown in announcing the development of a literature strategy for Victoria, as part of Creative State 2028. I also welcome the federal government's establishment of Writing Australia and the support it will provide to strengthen Australian literature.

Thanks also to our generous supporters and partners, including City of Melbourne, and our education and corporate partners. Your support elevates our programming, helping important stories reach more people.

My thanks to fellow Board members who so generously give their time and experience to guide and support me and the Centre's team – you are a formidable brains trust and it is a privilege to work with you. I express my gratitude to outgoing Board member Jamila Rizvi for her enthusiasm and dedication and welcome Michele Fonseca who joined our Board as an observer in 2025.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the leadership and vision of our CEO Erin Vincent and the depth of talent and dedication of the leadership team. The Board and I are so proud of what has been a truly defining year for The Wheeler Centre and we are excited by the promise of what 2026 will bring.

Kate Torney OAM
Chair, The Wheeler Centre

'I think it's really important for democracy that we have these conversations.'

Patricia Karvelas in
The Liberal Party: Where to From Here?



A Message from Our CEO, Erin Vincent



A decade and a half on, very few cities in the world have anything like The Wheeler Centre, a place that creates space for brave conversations and respectful debate.

In 2025 we programmed broadly, and we experienced strong demand from audiences wanting to hear varied perspectives, with some of the most complex conversations among our best attended.

We were reminded of the responsibility that comes with delivering impactful public programming and we are grateful to the writing community for the role they play in the work we do. The Wheeler Centre exists because of writers and I also want to thank our audiences who turn up to listen and engage.

Inspiring people through books and ideas and creating new pathways to reading has always been at the heart of The Wheeler Centre's role, yet over the past year that work has felt more urgent than ever. With literacy levels in decline around the world, Melbourne, a celebrated UNESCO City of Literature, has a critical role to play in protecting Melbourne's vibrant literary culture.

I want to express my sincere thanks to The Wheeler Centre Board, led by our incredible Chair Kate Torney. Their leadership and support have been critical to our success, as has the passion and commitment of The Wheeler Centre team.

Our Executive Coordinator and Office Manager Indi Wild finished her time with us after two and

a half years, and I'd like to thank Indi for her hard work and dedication. We were thrilled to welcome Sarah Rainbird as our new Head of Development and Pranati Narayan Visweswaran as our Program Administrator.

To Maureen and Tony Wheeler, thank you for your enduring generosity and all that you do to support and protect The Wheeler Centre's future. To our amazing community of donors, your support makes all that we do possible, thank you for believing in our vision and helping enrich public debate through literature and ideas.

Because of you, we held over 120 events featuring international and Australian writers, including celebrated Irish novelist Colm Tóibín and national treasure Helen Garner. We invited audiences to engage with a rich variety of literary forms and ideas, from poetry, memoir and fiction to current affairs and politics.

With your help, we also expanded our regional presence by holding 18 events in places such as Warrnambool, Geelong, Kyneton and the Mornington Peninsula, reaching new audiences and building community in hubs beyond Melbourne.

We established exciting new partnerships in 2025, including with ABC's *Australian Story*, The Australia Institute, *The Guardian's* Back to Back Barriers podcast and Tough Guy Book Club. We also delivered several family events to inspire the next generation of readers and thinkers, including a children's literature festival in partnership with Abbotsford Convent and a sold-out event with Diary of Wimpy Kid creator Jeff Kinney. We rebranded our Watch, Listen, Read platforms as part of the launch for an exciting digital strategy designed to bring the stories and ideas shared at The Wheeler Centre to more people in more

places, and we expanded our flagship writers' development program, The Next Chapter, from five places to ten, thanks to the generosity of the Koshland Innovation Fund. We delivered the 2025 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards on behalf of the Victorian Government, with Nukgal Wurra author and artist Wanda Gibson becoming the first person to win both the prize for the children's literature category and overall Victorian Prize for Literature, taking home a total \$125,000 for her stunning debut picture book *Three Dresses*.

I would like to sincerely thank the Minister for Creative Industries, the Hon. Colin Brooks, and the team at Creative Victoria for their ongoing support to the creative sector and for inviting The Wheeler Centre to help develop a new literature strategy for Victoria. Additionally, we extend deep gratitude to the team at City of Melbourne for their commitment and dedication to strengthening the sector.

The Wheeler Centre community includes its wonderful resident organisations that bring our building and literary hub to life and I thank them for their collaboration and collegiality. And we are grateful to our valued cultural partners including University of Melbourne and Readings Foundation; our accommodation partner Sofitel Melbourne on Collins; our wine sponsor Montalto; Shiff and Co for their pro bono legal support; and our major event and venue partners RMIT University and Fed Square.

The Wheeler Centre's milestone 15th year was a chance to reflect, celebrate and dream, and we are looking ahead to 2026 with excitement and ambition.

Erin Vincent
CEO, The Wheeler Centre

Our 15th Year in Review*

121
Events presented
in 2025[^]

17968
Live event
tickets sold



Accessible Ticketing

902
Under 30s
tickets sold



2664
Seniors tickets sold

738
Pay What You
Wish tickets sold

54
No One Turned Away for a
Lack of Funds tickets sold

Events in Melbourne & Beyond

17313
Live event tickets
sold in Melbourne



112
Events in Melbourne

17
Events in Regional Victoria

1770
Live Regional audiences

* Figures include events presented by The Wheeler Centre between 1 January to 31 December 2025.

[^] Figure includes repeat presentations of the same event, such as multiple dates for sold-out sessions and multi-session event programs delivered across several days.

Wheeler Centre Members

342
Members



583
Tickets purchased by Members

Wheeler Kids + Education

19
Wheeler Kids + Education events



2307
Live audiences at Wheeler Kids + Education events

556
New audiences for Wheeler Kids + Education

2025 Snapshot



5705
Tickets sold to politics and current affairs events

488
Tickets sold to First Nations events

5335
Tickets sold to literature events

493
Tickets sold to science and technology events

1359
Tickets sold to arts and culture events

462
Tickets sold to performance and storytelling events

625
Tickets sold to sport events

556
New audiences for Wheeler Kids + Education

586
Tickets sold to climate and environment events



* Figures include events presented by The Wheeler Centre between 1 January to 31 December 2025.

2025 Program in Review

Books, Writing and Ideas at The Wheeler Centre:

In 2025, The Wheeler Centre strengthened its reputation as Australia's leading institution for public conversation, presenting a rich and diverse range of perspectives, stories, literary forms and ideas.

Kate Reid: On Fast Cars and Croissants
Tuesday 25 November

The E. W. Cole Lecture: Siang Lu on Failure
Thursday 20 November

Contemporary Connections
Wednesday 19 November

Quarterly Essay at 100: What We Have Learned
Tuesday 18 November

Trent Dalton: Gravity Let Me Go
Thursday 13 November

We Will Not Be Silenced
Thursday 13 November

The Australian Wars
Wednesday 12 November

The Mushroom Tapes: Conversations about a Triple Murder Trial
Monday 10 November

Jay Kristoff: Empire of the Dawn
Wednesday 29 October

Dying: A Life Well Lived
Wednesday 29 October

One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This
Wednesday 22 October

Sophie Gilbert: Girl on Girl
Tuesday 21 October

Jane Harper: Last One Out
Wednesday 15 October

Griffin Dunne: The Friday Afternoon Club
Tuesday 14 October

Callie Hart on Quicksilver and Brimstone
Thursday 9 October

Money: The Greatest Story Ever Sold
Wednesday 8 October

Bob Brown: Defiance
Tuesday 7 October

Jason Stanley on Fascism
Thursday 2 October

Melissa Leong: Guts
Wednesday 1 October

AFL Grand Final: Winner Takes All
Wednesday 24 September

We Used to Be Journos: Live
Saturday 20 September

Australian Story: Leigh Sales with Jelena Dokic
Thursday 18 September

Randa Abdel-Fattah: Discipline
Tuesday 9 September

Australian Political Book of the Year: Shortlist Announcement
Monday 8 September

Luke Patterson: A Savage Turn
Saturday 6 September

The Liberal Party: Where to from Here?
Thursday 4 September

Tracey Lee Holmes: A Life Through Sport
Wednesday 3 September

Flights of Romantasy
Tuesday 2 September

Liz Pelly: Mood Machine
Thursday 28 August

How to Live Forever
Wednesday 27 August

Charting the Future: First Nations Knowledges and Artificial Intelligence
Tuesday 26 August

We're All Just Trying Our Best
Thursday 21 August

Consuming Culture
Saturday 16 August

Hatred of Poetry
Thursday 14 August

John Vaillant: Fire Weather
Wednesday 13 August

Destiny: Writing from the Diaspora
Tuesday 12 August

Emerging Writers' Festival: Program Launch
Thursday 7 August

Adam Courtenay: My Father Bryce
Wednesday 6 August

Drawn to Action
Tuesday 5 August

Cheers to That: A Night of Books and Beers
Saturday 26 July

Better Off Said: Cats and Dogs
Saturday 19 July

Laura Jean McKay: The Wrong Path to the Right Story
Saturday 19 July

Victoria's Path to Treaty
Thursday 17 July

Creating the Universe
Wednesday 16 July

Strength, Vision, Legacy: Blak Classics Reborn
Thursday 10 July

Jana Wendt in Conversation
Wednesday 9 July

Masterclass: Playwriting
Saturday 5 July

Lauren Roberts: Fearless
Wednesday 25 June

Yarning Strong
Friday 20 June

Cheng Lei: A Memoir of Freedom
Wednesday 18 June

Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza
Tuesday 27 May

Jeanette Winterson: Forty Years of Storytelling
Saturday 24 May

Colm Tóibín: From Brooklyn to Long Island
Wednesday 21 May

You Are Here with David Nicholls
Tuesday 20 May

Colm Tóibín: From Brooklyn to Long Island
Monday 19 May

Julian Kingma and Andrew Denton: The Power of Choice
Monday 19 May

Amie Kaufman and Meagan Spooner: Lady's Knight
Saturday 17 May

Back to Back Barriers: Live
Thursday 15 May

Micaela Sahhar: Find Me at the Jaffa Gate
Wednesday 14 May

Anne-Marie Te Whiu: Mettle
Monday 14 April

Rachel Morton: The Sun Was Electric Light
Thursday 10 April



Jelena Dokic in conversation with Leigh Sales at The Edge for a live recording of Australian Story. Photo: ABC



'I always feel like the person who is willing to travel the furthest ideological distance to listen to somebody is showing the greatest wisdom, so thank you.'

Peter Beinart in Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza



'Going out and doing these events, there is such a hunger for, not collective action but movements of women again, almost like consciousness-raising seminars. [...] Every time you're in a room with other women there's so much that's different in the discourse than there is when you're online. There's just a real energy, it's so much easier to listen and to communicate and to respect each other when we're all in person and we're not talking on our phones.'

Sophie Gilbert in Sophie Gilbert: Girl On Girl

What's the Big Idea?

Wednesday 9 April

Stella Prize 2025 Shortlist Announcement

Tuesday 8 April

Love, Loss and Ambition with Brooke Boney

Friday 4 April

The Correspondent: Special Preview Screening

Tuesday 1 April

Best of Australian Poems 2024 Showcase

Thursday 27 March

The Restless Mind of Robert Dessaix

Wednesday 26 March

Jess Hill on Stopping Family Violence

Tuesday 25 March

Lucia Osborne-Crowley on the Trial of Ghislaine Maxwell

Tuesday 11 March

Kara Swisher: Burn Book

Thursday 6 March

Making and Breaking the News

Wednesday 5 March

Rachel Kushner: Creation Lake

Tuesday 4 March

Write, Edit, Publish: Navigating the Literary World with Anton Hur

Sunday 2 March

Fit Check: Size, Price and Sustainability in Fashion

Saturday 1 March

Anton Hur: Toward Eternity

Friday 28 February

Pankaj Mishra: The World After Gaza

Wednesday 26 February

Barrie Cassidy: An Election Special

Tuesday 18 February

Photo Left: The Fifth Estate host Sally Warhaft in conversation with Ukrainian Ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko.
Photo: The Wheeler Centre

Books and Ideas at Montalto

Set at Montalto's stunning Red Hill winery on the Mornington Peninsula, this popular regional series saw some of Australia's most beloved writers present an intimate discussion about their work – accompanied by excellent food, wine and rolling green vineyards stretching as far as the eye can see.

Heather Rose at Montalto

Friday 17 October

Jana Wendt at Montalto

Friday 11 July

Jacinta Parsons at Montalto

Friday 6 June

Jamila Rizvi and Rosie Waterland at Montalto

Friday 9 May

Geraldine Brooks at Montalto

Friday 28 February

Bookish Club

Bookish Club is for our most literary at heart. Held at The Moat beneath The Wheeler Centre, each event saw a special guest select a book to discuss with an intimate audience over delectable finger sandwiches, fresh scones and a glass of bubbly.

Bookish Club with Myf Warhurst

Saturday 5 July

Bookish Club with Jan Fran

Saturday 20 September

Bookish Club with Benjamin Law

Saturday 1 November

Photo Right: Guests enjoy a 2025 Hot Desk Fellowship edition of the popular The Next Big Thing series.
Photo: Cameron Grant, Parenthesy



The Fifth Estate

In 2025, The Fifth Estate continued to provide audiences with access to in-depth analysis of current affairs and today's key debates. A mainstay of The Wheeler Centre's program and of public conversation in Melbourne, The Fifth Estate is hosted by broadcaster, anthropologist and writer Sally Warhaft. This long-running series sees guests from the world of politics, culture, technology, history, journalism and international relations dissect pressing questions of policy, power and public affairs.

Democracy: What, When and How

Saturday 15 November

What Trump's Second Term Means for Australia

Wednesday 10 September

On the Money

Saturday 16 August

Ukraine at the Crossroads

Tuesday 17 June

Ben Macintyre on 45 Years Since Operation Nimrod

Thursday 22 May

Citizenship and its Discontents

Saturday 10 May

Digital Natives, Data Captives:

Protecting Kids Online

Wednesday 2 April



The Next Big Thing

The Next Big Thing is The Wheeler Centre's beloved, long-running reading series, showcasing outstanding emerging writers and the stories they bring to life – all in the cosy atmosphere of The Moat restaurant and bar.

The Next Big Thing:

Hot Desk 2025 Edition #3

Monday 24 November

The Next Big Thing: Fates and Furies

Monday 17 November

The Next Big Thing:

Stories from Singapore

Monday 13 October

The Next Big Thing:

Hot Desk 2025 Edition #2

Monday 22 September

The Next Big Thing:

Emerging Writers' Festival 2025 Edition

Monday 15 September

The Next Big Thing:

Hot Desk 2025 Edition #1

Monday 7 July

The Next Big Thing:

Roads Less Travelled

Monday 30 June

The Next Big Thing: Melbourne

Writers Festival 2025 Edition

Monday 10 May

The Next Big Thing:

Twists and Turns

Monday 31 March

The Next Big Thing series is generously supported by George and Rosa Morstyn.



Felice Arena guides audiences through a theatrical read-along of *My Big Secret* at Wheeler Kids x Abbotsford Convent. Photo: Tamarah Scott

Regional Events

The Wheeler Centre's regional program remains central to our mission of sharing literature, storytelling and big ideas with communities throughout Victoria.

Jane Harper: Last One Out
Wednesday 29 October (Geelong)

One Day Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This
Friday 24 October (Queenscliffe)

Tracey Lee Holmes: A Life Through Sport
Thursday 4 September (Ballarat)

Adam Courtenay: My Father Bryce
Tuesday 5 August (Geelong)

Mikaella Clements and Onjuli Datta: Feast While You Can
Tuesday 13 May (Castlemaine)

Jamila Rizvi and Rosie Waterland: Broken Brains
Thursday 8 May (Geelong)

Robert Dessaix: Chameleon
Tuesday 25 March (Kyneton)

Up Late

The Wheeler Centre's Up Late series invites audiences to settle in after the sun sets for an evening of daring, provocative – and at times simply entertaining – conversation.

Up Late: Queer Myths for Lovers
Friday 7 November

Up Late: Pursuits of Pleasure
Friday 4 July

Wheeler Kids + Education

Wheeler Kids + Education is our series of year-round events for young readers and writers. Promoting a culture of reading for pleasure amongst children is one of the most important factors

in determining their future and The Wheeler Centre plays a vital role in fostering this passion by creating engaging literary experiences that inspire young readers to develop a lifelong love of books and learning.

Our 2025 program included our Wheeler Kids x Abbotsford Convent children's festival and a smorgasbord of hands-on workshops, musical story times and a special, interactive performance by Jeff Kinney, the multi-million-copy bestselling creator of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.

Nova Weetman: Kids' Writing Workshops (Warrnambool)
Monday 22 to Tuesday 23 September (regional)

OutLoud Slam! 2025 Finals
Monday 25 August to Monday 1 September

Plain English Speaking Award 2025: Victorian State Final
Friday 25 July

Crafty Kids' Lab with Yuval Zommer
Tuesday 15 July 2025

Musical Storytime: Bila's Big Dance
Thursday 10 to Saturday 12 July (multiple sessions)

Top Scribe 2025: Anthology Launch
Friday 13 June

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Hot Mess Show
Saturday 31 May

Karys McEwen: Kids' Writing Workshops (Warrnambool)
Wednesday 9 April (regional)

Karys McEwen: The Paperbark Tree Committee (Warrnambool)
Wednesday 9 April (regional)

Wheeler Kids x Abbotsford Convent

Felice Arena: Live & Hilarious
Saturday 5 April

Caution! This Event Contains Deadly Reptiles
Saturday 5 April

Convent, Crafty Kids' Lab
Saturday 5 April (multiple sessions)

'I enjoyed the friendliness and intimacy of the venue and definitely the glass of bubbles and the ribbon sandwiches!'

'The hosts selected were also amazing and did an amazing job running the discussions.'

Anonymous feedback from our Bookish Club attendee

A Message from Content Committee Chair, Jock Serong



Led by Gene Smith, The Wheeler Centre's programming team has steered a confident course through an incredibly complex and challenging time to trade in the currency of literature and ideas, with the full support of the Board and its Content Committee. The Committee provides strategic advice and deep industry knowledge that helps to shape – but does not direct – The Wheeler Centre's public event program and special projects. These include its sector-leading creative development initiatives and the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Content Committee members share a clear and strongly held view that their role is not to intervene in curatorial decisions or influence artistic output. Creative leadership rests firmly with the programming team. Since the terms of reference were agreed in April 2024, the Committee's primary function has been to ensure alignment with The Wheeler Centre's broader strategic objectives, to serve as a constructive sounding board for ideas and potential risks and to keep the wider Board informed about the programming team's work. The Committee also supports the programming team to consider projects that draw on The Wheeler Centre Endowment Fund, ensuring each of them remain consistent with the aims of the original funding deed. I am pleased to report that, in my view, the Committee fulfilled this role effectively and appropriately throughout 2025.

The Wheeler Centre has performed exemplary work during a period of heightened polarisation. Plans for 2026 are already shaping up to be ambitious and daring, guided by an unwavering commitment to audiences, artists and stakeholders and to its role as both a national and international leader in literary culture and public discourse. I would like to thank my fellow Committee members, Julie Pinkham and incoming Board Member Michele Fonseca, former Chair of the Content Committee, Jamila Rizvi and The Wheeler Centre's CEO Erin Vincent for their contributions.

Lauren Roberts at Melbourne Town Hall for Lauren Roberts: Fearless. Photo: Shannyn Higgins.



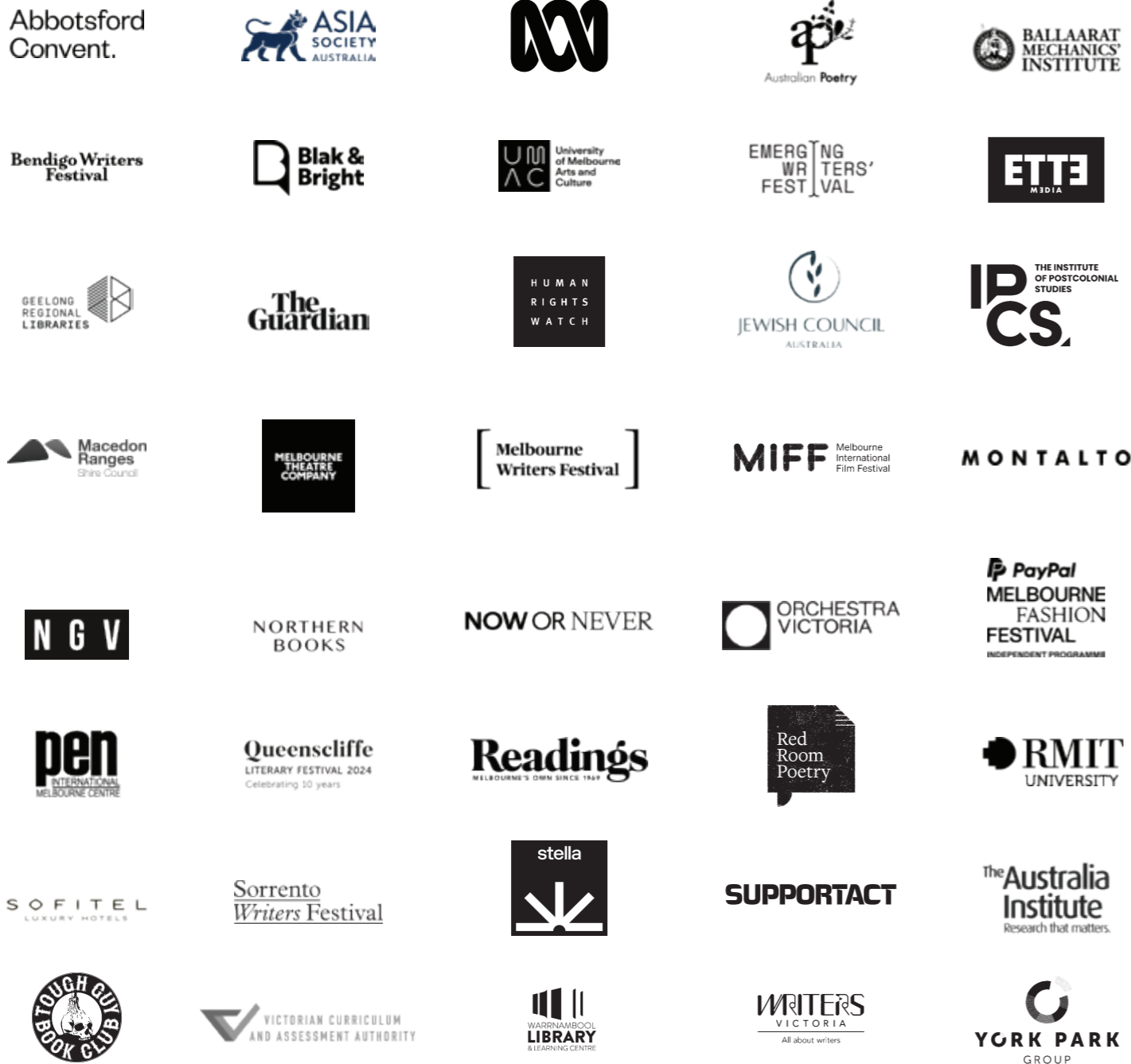
'The most important thing is protecting your passion. I think it's so important to bottle up that love and care you have for writing, because as long as you have that, you can keep writing forever.'

**Lauren Roberts in
Lauren Roberts: Fearless**

2025 Program Partners

Our program partners play a critical role in helping us reach the widest possible audience in metropolitan Melbourne and in suburban and regional communities.

2025 Partners



Speakers

In 2025, more than 330 speakers took the stage at The Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, across Victoria, throughout Australia and online. Through panels, talks, readings, performances and workshops, we were inspired by Australian and international writers, thinkers, poets, comedians, musicians and podcasters who shared their stories, ideas and insights. The Wheeler Centre is deeply grateful for the creativity, vision and generosity of all the brilliant artists who contributed to our 2025 program.

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Adam Courtenay | Chenturan Aran | Hilary Harper | Kirsty Marillier | Nova Weetman | Satyajit Das |
| Adele Ferguson | Chloe Elisabeth Wilson | Hye Jung Han | Lamorna | Omar El Akkad | Scott-Patrick Mitchell |
| Alan Rusbridger | Chloe Hooper | Imii Lang | Nightingale | Onjali Datta | Sean Kelly |
| Alice Skye | Chris Masters | Inala Cooper | Laura Jane Lee | Osman Faruqi | Sez |
| Alice Zaslavsky | Chrsitos Tsiolkas | Isabella Eichler-Onus | Laura Jean McKay | Pankaj Mishra | Shay Leighton |
| Alicia Sometimes | Claire Edwardes | Isabella Vadiveloo | Laura Lethlean | Patricia Karvelas | Shelley Ware |
| Allee Richards | Colm Tóibín | Ita Mehrotra | Laura McCluskey | Patrick Lenton | Siang Lu |
| Alyx Gorman | Coral Reeve | Jacinta Le Plastrier | Laura Tingle | Paul Collis | Sinead Stubbins |
| Amie Kaufman | Corey Tutt | Jacinta Parsons | Lauren Roberts | Paul Sakkal | Sofia Sabbagh |
| Amy Nicholson | Corrie Perkin | James Barry | Leah Senior | Peter Beinart | Soju Gang |
| Amy Thunig-McGregor | CS Pacat | James Scullin | Leigh Sales | Peter Greste | Sophie Black |
| André Dao | Cynthia Timoti | Jamil Badi | Libbie Chellew | Philly | Sophie Gilbert |
| Andrea Thompson | Daniel James | Jamila Rizvi | Lisa French | PiO | Sophie Quick |
| Andrew Denton | Darcy Green | Jan Fran | Lisa Tirreno | Prof Marcia Langton | Stacey McEwan |
| Andrew Sutherland | David Marr | Jana Wendt | Liz Pelly | Professor Patrick McGorry | Stacy Gougoulis |
| Andy Jackson | David McWilliams | Jane Harper | Louise Milligan | Rachel Ang | Stephanie Dogfoot |
| Ange Crawford | David Michell | Jane Harper | Mabel Gibson | Rachel Kushner | Suren Jayemanne |
| Angelica Jade Bastién | David Nicholls | Jane Yang | Lucia Osborne-Crowley | Rachel Morton | Tara June Winch |
| Anna Walker | David Quirk | Jason Noble | Luke Patterson | Rachel Newbound | Tarang Chawla |
| Anne-Marie Te Whiu | Delsa Tuitea | Jason Stanley | Mabel Gibson | Rachel Perkins | Tasneem Chopra |
| Antoinette Latouff | Dominic Amerena | Jason Steger | Madeline Grey | Raf Epstein | Teneille Clarke |
| Anton Hur | Dr Emma Shortis | Jay Kristoff | Madeline Nunn | Randa Abdel-Fattah | Tess Armstrong |
| Antony Loewenstein | DS Magid | Jeanette Winterson | Madison Griffiths | Rebecca Chapman | Thabani Tshuma |
| Ariel Zeleznikow | Eleanor Nguyen | Jeanine Leane | Maggie Zhou | Rebecca Harkins-Cross | Thirangie Jayatilake |
| Johnston | Elizabeth McCarthy | Jeff Kinney | Maithree | Thomas Mayo | Thomas Wolles |
| Aylin Mulayim | Ella Rowe | Jeff Sparrow | Wijesekara | Richard Dennis | Tigest Girma |
| Barrie Cassidy | Elliott McMahon | Jelena Dokic | Maiy Azize | Richard Roxburgh | Tim Byrne |
| Bayley Turner | Eloise Grills | Jess Hill | Maria Angelico | Richard Watts | Toby Fitch |
| Bebe Oliver | Emilie Zoey Baker | Jess McGuire | Marieke Hardy | Rick Morton | Tom Scott |
| Becca Hatch | Emma Clancey | Jess Zononi | Mary Kostakidis | Robert Dessaix | Toni Jordan |
| Bek Schilling | Emma Do | Jessica Russ-Smith | MaryAnn Bin-Sallik | Robert Dossaix | Tony Barry |
| Ben Macintyre | Emma Pei Yin | Jo Langdon | Matt Shaw | Ronan Apcar | Tony Birch |
| Benjamin Law | Eric Beecher | Jo Lauder | Meagan Spooner | Ronnie Scott | Tracee Hutchison |
| Beverly Wang | Eric Puchner | John Silvester | Mel Fulton | Rosie Waterland | Tracy Lee Holmes |
| Bianca Lucchesi | Esther Anatolitis | John Vaillant | Melissa Leong | Roslyn Orlando | Tracy Lee Holmes |
| Blair Harris | Evelyn Araluen | Jonathan Chan | Micaela Sahhar | Ruby-Rose Pivet-Marsh | Trent Dalton |
| Bob Brown | Felice Arena | Josephine Mead | Michael Sahhar | Michael Veitch | Tristen Harwood |
| Bob Murphy | Freddy Weir | Judith Brett | Michael Bachelard | Michael Williams | Vasyl |
| Bri Lee | Gayle Kennedy | Julian Kingma | Michael Sun | Michelle D. Lazarus | Myroshnychenko |
| Brodie Lancaster | George Brandis | Kanika Chopra | Michael Veitch | Mikaella Clements | Veronica Sullivan |
| Brooke Boney | George | Kara Swisher | Michael Veitch | Mimi Kwa | Vidya Rajan |
| Bruce Wolpe | Megalogenis | Karys McEwen | Michael Williams | moirra. | Violet Kieu |
| Callie Hart | Georgia Grace | Kate Cuthbert | Michelle D. Lazarus | Munira Tabassum | Virginia Trioli |
| Candice Chung | Georgia Kartas | Kate Jinx | Mikaella Clements | Ahmed | Wen-yi Lee |
| Carly Findlay | Geraldine Brooks | Kate Mildenhall | Mimi Kwa | Myf Warhurst | Yasmin Smith |
| Caroline Wilson | Gisele Kapterian | Kate Reid | moirra. | N. J. Madden | Yuval Zommer |
| Cat Rabbit | Grace Yee | Katie Mack | Munira Tabassum | Nadia Mahjouri | Zoe Terakes |
| Cathy McGowan | Grace Yee | Katie Paine | Ahmed | Nam Le | |
| Charlotte Guest | Graham Panther | Kee'ahn | Myf Warhurst | Ngarra Murray | |
| Cheng Lei | Griffin Dunne | Keith Wolahan | N. J. Madden | | |
| | Helen Garner | Kim Hoggard | Nadia Mahjouri | | |
| | Henry Reynolds | Kimba Griffith | Nam Le | | |
| | | | Ngarra Murray | | |

Opportunities and Special Programs



Winners from the 2025 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards at the ceremony. From left to right: Chris Ames, Susan Hampton, Emma Lord, Robert Skinner, Jeanine Leane, Bruce Gibson (son of Wanda Gibson), Amy McQuire and Nathan Maynard. Photo: Laura May Grogan

Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

Administered by The Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Premier of Victoria, the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards celebrate outstanding contemporary Australian writing each year. The 2025 shortlists, announced in December 2024, highlighted a diverse range of exceptional works published over the previous year. The awards also included the inaugural John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing, named in honour of the respected comedian and screenwriter behind some of Australia's sharpest film and television comedies. High profile Victorian writer and educator John Marsden was also commemorated with the announcement that the 2026 Writing for Young Adults prize would bear his name.

Winners across the main categories – Fiction, Non-Fiction Humour, Drama, Poetry, Indigenous Writing, Children's Literature and Writing for Young Adults – each received \$25,000. The overall \$100,000 Victorian Prize for Literature was awarded to Wanda Gibson for her children's picture book *Three Dresses*.

In addition, Melbourne writer Chris Ames won the Unpublished Manuscript Award for *I Made This Just For You*. The manuscript was later acquired by Hardie Grant Publishing and is scheduled for publication in 2026.

The 2025 category winners were

Victorian Prize for Literature:

Three Dresses, Wanda Gibson

The Prize for Fiction:

Highway 13, Fiona McFarlane

The Prize for Non-Fiction:

anything can happen, Susan Hampton

The John Clarke Prize for Humour Writing:

I'd Rather Not, Robert Skinner

The Prize for Drama: *37*, Nathan Maynard

The Prize for Poetry:

Gawimarra: Gathering, Jeanine Leane

The Prize for Indigenous Writing:

Black Witness, Amy McQuire

The Prize for Writing for Young Adults:

Anomaly, Emma Lord

The Prize for Children's Literature:

Three Dresses, Wanda Gibson

The Unpublished Manuscript Award:

I Made This Just For You, Chris Ames

The People's Choice Award:

I'd Rather Not, Robert Skinner



Diem Nguyen presents at a special 2025 Hot Desk Fellowship edition of the popular The Next Big Thing series. Photo: Cameron Grant, Parenthesy

Hot Desk Fellowships

In 2025, The Wheeler Centre celebrated the 14th year of its Hot Desk Fellowships, awarding 22 places to emerging writers with support from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne, the Readings Foundation and Just Pretending theatre group. Fellows worked across a wide range of genres, including fiction, creative non-fiction, comics, memoir, middle-grade and young adult fiction, playwriting and poetry.

Over ten weeks, participants used dedicated workspaces at The Wheeler Centre to develop projects, refine their craft and build creative networks. Their work was shared with the broader community through published excerpts on The Wheeler Centre's website and readings at special, dedicated editions of The Next Big Thing.

Hot Desk Fellows

- Jamil Badi
- Libbie Chellew
- Teneille Clerke
- Emma Clancey
- Nina Culley
- Yasmin
- Thirangie Jayatilake
- Violet Kieu
- Jo Langdon
- N. J. Madden
- Elliott McMahon
- Josephine Mead
- Madelaine Nunn
- Katie Paine
- Helena Pantsis
- Graham Panther
- Ruby-Rose Pivet-Marsh
- Bek Schilling
- Delsa Tuitea
- Freddy (Emily) Weir
- Ange Yang
- Rebecca Zhong



The Next Chapter

The Next Chapter program is a sector-leading initiative established by The Wheeler Centre in 2018. It provides writers from underrepresented backgrounds with invaluable support, including a \$15,000 stipend, a dedicated mentor, a week-long writing residency at Varuna, The National Writers' House and an end-of-year publishing industry intensive. The program aims to amplify diverse voices, ensuring that Australia can enjoy stories that reflect the rich range of Australian identities and experiences.

In 2025, efforts were made to expand the program and increase the number of places available for the 2026 intake. Thanks to secured funding for ten participants, a highly competitive selection process – featuring over 550 submissions – resulted in ten writers being chosen in November 2025 to embark on The Next Chapter journey in 2026.

The 2026 intake of The Next Chapter writers were announced in November 2025. They are:

Jamil Badi
Lou Garcia-Dolnik
Kathryn Gledhill-Tucker
Maya Hodge
Ledya Khamou
Simone King
Neika Lehman
Lucy Norton
Amanda Tink
Panda Wong

In addition to the ten successful recipients, the judges identified three Highly Commended writers:

Aimee Knight
Chloe Mayne
Taonga Sendama

In 2025, The Wheeler Centre was delighted to launch three books developed through earlier iterations of The Next Chapter program. These were:

Meet Me at the Jaffa Gate by Micaela Sahhar
Mettle by Anne-Marie Te Whiu
A Savage Turn by Luke Patterson

The Next Chapter fellowship recipient Luke Patterson signs a copy of his electrifying debut poetry collection, *A Savage Turn*. Photo: James Henry



Watch, Listen, Read

Following the launch of our four-year strategy, Storytelling and Ideas for Everyone, Everywhere, The Wheeler Centre formally introduced its Digital Strategy in 2025, identifying digital growth as a critical opportunity to expand brand reach, sustain relevance and increase access for our audiences. The strategy positions The Wheeler Centre not only as a leading physical destination for books, writing and ideas, but as a leading digital hub.

At the core of this strategy is the revitalisation of our three existing content streams: Watch (video), Listen (podcasts) and Read (commissioned writing). Through a unified sub-brand with a refreshed visual identity, consistent publishing frequency and integrated distribution, this work was launched and is now being implemented.

The Wheeler Centre Production team continued to perform impressively throughout 2025. They managed and operated all technical aspects in the Performance Space, while filming and editing all internal and offsite events at an exceptionally high standard. General building operations continued to be delivered by Production, helping bring much needed support in this area to all staff and resident organisations.

Following the launch of the strategy, we've seen incredible growth on our channels. For the 2025 calendar year, Instagram reached **1.2 million** accounts (up **356%** on the previous period) and generated **2 million** views. On YouTube, lifetime views in 2025 reached a total **7.9 million**, with over **26k** subscribers and

33.7 million impressions. Year-on-year growth from 2024 to 2025 includes an **18%** increase in total views, a **139%** increase in views on new content and a **66%** increase in new subscribers compared with 2024. While archival material continues to deliver scale, newly released content is continuing to drive audience growth and engage new audiences with our Watch content.

Operationally, the marketing and production teams collaborated on the development of a seamless backend workflow process which enabled a 48-hour turnaround on video production. The marketing team developed a coordinated release schedule for content across e-news, post-event communications and social platforms which in turn saw a strong increase in viewership and audience awareness.

Digital is now embedded across programming, commissioning and distribution, extending the life of our conversations beyond the room and strengthening The Wheeler Centre's reach both nationally and internationally.

Digital Audiences

107k

Total Digital audiences on content produced in 2025



71527

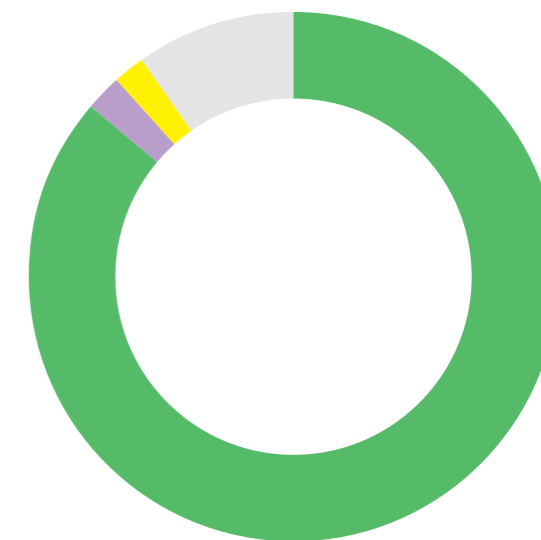
Long form video content (YouTube)

35675

The Wheeler Centre Podcast downloads

492k

Digital audiences on all Wheeler Centre content



424k

Long form video content (YouTube)

10775

Livestreams

9915

Short form video

47008

All Podcast downloads

Social Media

153k

Total social media followers



Content Published

65%

of 2025 events available online

25

podcast Listen episodes published

72

Watch videos published online

22

longform Read articles published

Instagram

2m

Views

89.6k

Engagement

1.2m

Reach (356%+ on previous)

7.3k

New followers



** All figures relate to 1 January to 31 December 2025, unless otherwise noted*

Instagram: Most engaged content in 2025

Liz Pelly:
Mood Machine

801k

Views

613.3k

Reach

50k

Engagement

Sophie Gilbert:
Girl on Girl

222.9k

Views

171.9k

Reach

17.3k

Engagement



City of Literature Office in 2025

In 2025, we worked with 105 writers and artists, including 63 from Melbourne and 46 from 25 different sister Cities of Literature. International connections were created, strengthened and nurtured – we collaborated with 29 Cities of Literature across Africa, Asia, Europe, America and Oceania on 16 projects. Of these 16 projects, 9 were initiated by us, including new and continuing initiatives.

The City of Literature Office delivered a range of digital programs, delegations and international collaborations with other Creative Cities. One of the key initiatives was Parallel Panels, a residency exchange program in partnership with RMIT Culture and Bucheon City of Literature, where graphic storytellers spent two weeks in each sister city to work on personal projects and engage with local peers. Earlier in the year, an online writer's room brought together seven comic artists from Melbourne, Reykjavik, Quebec City, Iowa City, Nottingham and Exeter to share re-interpretations of each other's work over nine weeks.

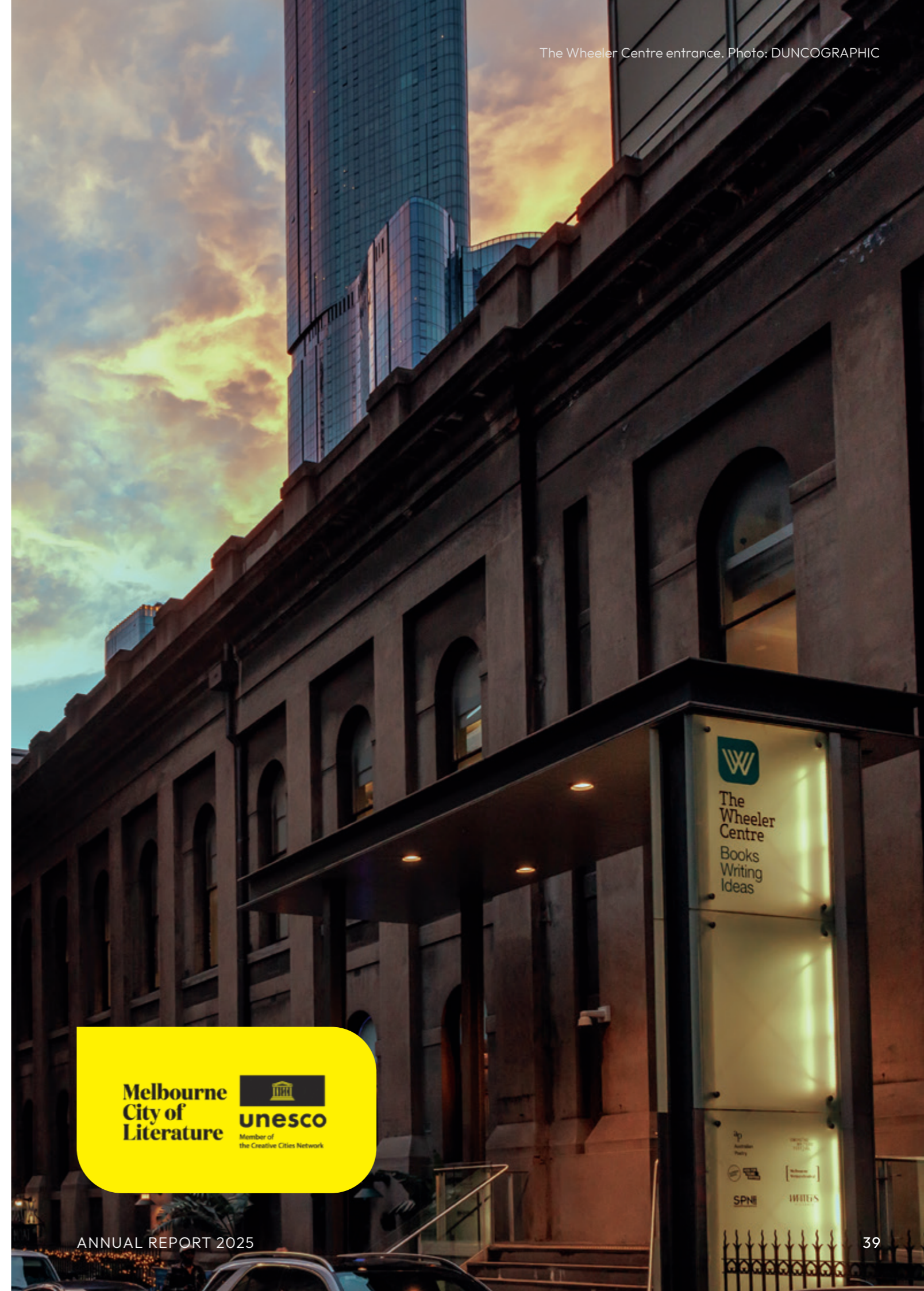
Another significant project, Today, Yesterday, Tomorrow, curated by Blak and Bright, created an international literary exchange between First Nations writers in Naarm (Melbourne), Wendake (Quebec City), Ōtepoti (Dunedin, New Zealand), Seattle and Taipei, finalising content with six filmed conversations. In partnership with Slemani City of Literature, The INKubator launched as our first bi-lingual (English and Kurdish) online

writer's room exploring character writing. Over 12 weeks, ten participants from Melbourne and Slemani created new short pieces of writing to be published across Iraq, Australia and the UNESCO Cities of Literature network.

The Virtual Writers in Residence program returned for its fifth year, hosting nine writers from cities including Quebec City, Dunedin, Edinburgh, Kraków, Dublin, Manchester, Lviv, Baghdad and Barcelona. These writers worked with local organisations to deliver workshops on topics from contemporary playwriting to Iraqi folklore, creative writing to poetry craft, fostering connections within the Melbourne literary community while producing original essays, zines and digital content.

In September, PenPals Network connected seven writers from Dublin with 11 writers from Melbourne through a four-part workshop series in collaboration with Emerging Writers Festival and Dublin City of Literature. Participants shared their favorite writers, workshopped their own writing, and built lasting international friendships. In December, Writing the City piloted in collaboration with Jakarta City of Literature, bringing together Indonesian and Melbourne writers to explore how urban environments shape creative work through workshops, festival meetings and city walks.

The Office responded to various callouts from sister Cities of Literature, commissioning local writers for overseas projects including Small Delights (Leeuwarden), The Bremen Town Language Musicians (Bremen), UNESCO Cities of Literature publication launch (Exeter), Poetry in the Cities of Literature (Odessa), Book Clubs of the Cities of Literature (Dunedin), and World Poetry Day celebrations across the network.



Colm Tóibín in conversation with Jason Steger at Colm Tóibín: From Brooklyn to Long Island, presented by The Wheeler Centre in partnership with Resident Organisation Melbourne Writers Festival and RMIT University. Photo: Shannyn Higgins.



Our Resident Organisations

Meet the resident organisations that call The Wheeler Centre home.

Australian Poetry exists as a national poetry body to interconnect and support a flourishing community of Australian poets, to enhance and promote their poetry, here and internationally, and to reach and engage directly with readers, lovers and potential admirers of Australian poetry, and promoters of it.

Blak & Bright is Australia's leading organisation championing First Nations literary voices. Founded in 2016 as their flagship literary festival, Blak & Bright also runs year-round events, workshops, panels and performances. These gatherings create vital spaces for Blak storytellers and conversations, showcasing writers at all stages of their careers to an expanding and increasingly diverse audience.

The **Emerging Writers' Festival** (EWF) is one of Australia's most established and well-respected literary festivals. We exist to develop, nurture and promote Australia's new writing talent, creating platforms for connecting writing communities and their audiences.

For over 30 years, **Express Media** has been developing, supporting and promoting young writers through workshops that develop skills, through opportunities for constructive feedback and publication, and through awards and programs that recognise excellence. Our flagship publication, *Voiceworks*, is made entirely by writers, editors and artists under the age of 25.

Melbourne Writers Festival brings writers and readers together to be inspired, challenged and thrilled by an intelligent, rousing and diverse

program of books and ideas. Since 1986, the organisation has entertained hundreds of thousands of readers as Australia's boldest literary festival. Based in Melbourne, a UNESCO City of Literature, we provide the inspiration and framework for vital, timely conversations.

The **PEN Melbourne Centre** is one of 147 PEN International centres worldwide whose members are united in a common concern for the art of writing and freedom of expression. As an affiliate of PEN International, PEN Melbourne brings writers together from across cultures to share experiences, explore ideas and conduct public conversations about how literature transforms, influences and fosters cross-cultural exchange.

The **Small Press Network** is a representative body for small and independent publishers in Australia. It was formed to promote independent publishing and support the principle of diversity within the publishing industry as a vital component of Australian literary culture.

Writers Victoria is a not-for-profit membership organisation that champions writers at all stages of their creative development in the heart of the city and out in the regions. We provide a large, diverse and lively program of online writing courses and workshops, and nurture writing talent with our mentorship and manuscript assessment services.

The Centre values the opportunity to work with these organisations towards our shared goals of promoting literature and ideas and supporting writers across Australia.



Our Supporters

The Wheeler Centre is strengthened by its community of supporters, and we are sincerely grateful for the many generous contributions to our work made by individual donors (through donations and bequests), philanthropic trusts and foundations, government and corporate partners and sponsors. Their continued support allows us to connect with audiences through bold, ambitious, thought-provoking programming and invest in the next generation of great Australian writers.

Principal Government Partner

Thank you to one of our founding partners, Creative Victoria for supporting The Wheeler Centre and for its commitment to creating a vibrant cultural sector in Victoria.

Government Partners

We also extend our thanks to the City of Melbourne for its ongoing support through the multi-year arts fund.

We thank Creative Australia for creating opportunities for writers through The Next Chapter program, advancing the careers of authors who reflect the diversity of Australian perspectives and experiences.

Trusts and Foundations

In 2025, we welcomed funding from the Koshland Innovation Fund, a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation, to support the 2026 Next Chapter Fellowship Program, enabling us to offer ten fellowships in 2026. We are truly grateful for Ellen Koshland's belief in this program.

Thank you also to the Malcolm Robertson Foundation for creating opportunities for underrepresented writers through The Next Chapter Program and for understanding the power of investing in writers at such a critical stage of their development.

In 2025, The Readings Foundation supported a place in the Hot Desk Fellowship Program for an emerging Young Adult writer, in memory of Australian Young Adult author Gabrielle Williams. Thank you to everyone at the Readings Foundation, particularly Mark Rubbo, for the visionary support of the Hot Desk Fellowships over so many years, and for continuing your support through the Gabrielle Williams Fellowship.

The fourth E. W. Cole Lecture built on the successful series to date, thanks to the generous support of the E. W. Cole Foundation. Fresh from winning the 2025 Miles Franklin Literary Award, Siang Lu reflected on persistence, reckoning with success and what it means to embrace failure. This annual lecture series invites Australia's biggest thinkers to deliver talks that spark bold and innovative ideas.

In 2025, we received funding from the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund to commission two writers in 2026 to create works for our Watch, Listen, Read digital channel and we would like to express our sincere gratitude for this support.

Education Partners

Our Hot Desk Fellowships wouldn't be possible without the funding from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne, along with the Readings Foundation, thank you for championing the work of emerging writers. The University of Melbourne's contribution gave twenty writers a stipend, and the time and physical space needed to create their next major work. Since 2017, the Just Pretending theatre group has also supported one Hot Desk Fellowship place specifically for female or non-binary participants emerging in the field of playwriting.

The University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts also offers five Highly Commended applicants from The Next Chapter program a 12-month mentorship with acclaimed, diverse writers from the University of Melbourne's Creative Writing Department, including the opportunity to access classes and resources connected to the University's Writing and Publishing programs.

We also thank Varuna: The National Writers House for agreeing to continue to be a part of The Next Chapter Fellowship Program in 2026.

Thank you also to RMIT Culture for your contribution to the creative process, providing a two-week residency for the winner of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards Prize for the Unpublished Manuscript Award winner.

Our Corporate Partners

To our corporate partners, we sincerely thank you for the many ways you contribute to the work that we do. Our wine sponsor Montalto, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, Melbourne for the luxury accommodation for our guests and Shiff and Co for its pro bono legal support.

Our Bequesters

To all of our supporters who have left a gift in their will to The Wheeler Centre, we understand what a significant life decision this is and we sincerely thank you for making this commitment to The Wheeler Centre's vision to be a globally renowned home for storytelling and ideas that is sought after and celebrated by writers, readers, speakers, listeners and decision-makers.

Our Audience

Finally, to our loyal and highly engaged audience and members – we extend our deepest gratitude to each of you for being such an important part of our journey. Thank you for embracing and supporting our work by coming along to our events and engaging with our bold, ambitious and thought-provoking programming.

Our Partners

GOVERNMENT



TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS



CORPORATE PARTNERS



OFFICIAL HOTEL PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNERS



Our Annual Giving Program Members

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to our founding patrons Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO for their continued investment in literary and intellectual engagement. In late 2023 Tony and Maureen supported the launch of our matched fundraising campaign with a transformational pledge to match all donations to the Centre for the next three years, up to one million dollars. We are so grateful for their belief in books and the exchange of ideas.

A very special thanks too to our writers' development programs, George and Rosa Morsytn for their support of The Next Big Thing and the Founders Circle.

We are grateful for the enduring support of our Annual Giving Program members who allow us to share the benefits of public programming inspired by books, writing and ideas. This support has also allowed us to take our conversations to more communities and to reach new audiences.

We would also like to thank and recognise all of those who donated what they were able to; every donation plays an important part in our story and in sustaining our vibrant community.

Patrons

Maureen Wheeler AO
Tony Wheeler AO

Game Changers

\$25,000+

Ellen Koshland, via the Koshland Innovation Fund
George and Rosa Morstyn
Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO

Conversation Starters

\$5000 – \$9999

The Hudson Family
Mark Rubbo OAM

Bright Sparks

\$2500 – \$4999

Colin Batrouney
Michael Cowen and Sharon Nathani
Jennifer Gilchrist

Enquiring Minds

\$1000 – \$2,499

Kristin Badger
Dr Marianne Broadbent
Sue Dahn
Megan Davis
Alice Hill
Jane Kunstler
Victoria Ponsford
Michael and Radhika Santhanam-Martin
Kate Torney OAM

Supporters

\$500 – \$999

Heather Carmody
Dr Shelley Dolan
Andy Griffiths
Sue Harper
Julie Ligetti
Elizabeth Loftus
Gaida Macs
Sue Ruse
Prof Steven Williams
Anonymous x 2



Peter Greste in conversation with Richard Roxburgh at The Correspondent: Special Preview Screening on 1 April 2025. Photo: Tamarah Scott

Message from People and Nominations Committee Chair, Julie Pinkham



The work of the People and Nominations Committee in 2025 focussed on strengthening staff engagement and planning for Board recruitment and renewal.

2025 was a very strong year of positive engagement and retention of staff. We welcomed Sarah Rainbird in the role of Head of Development, with a renewed focus on this crucial contribution to The Wheeler Centre's success. Across the organisation we had a very stable year in terms of staff retention with only one departure from an 18 person cohort. The Wheeler Centre is committed to staff development and is fully aware of the complex and evolving requirements of our organisation: through the year the team completed training in First Aid, First Nations Cultural Competency, Disability Access for our audience members, Interview techniques and working with trauma, amongst others.

During 2025 we continued to progress key policies impacting staff, expanded our staff leave policy inclusions, making important updates to our Child Safety and Privacy Policies, as well as reviewing our approaches to Flexible Work, Recruitment, Dispute Resolution and Workplace Health and Safety.

In 2025 the Committee had a key focus of supporting the Board's succession planning, recruiting Kristin Badger as a Director and welcoming Michele Fonseca as an observer.

Utilising her People and Culture expertise, Michele had already assisted in staff recruitment for The Wheeler Centre in 2025. We sadly farewelled Jamila Rizvi and thank for her service and valuable contributions as a Director and as Chair of the Content Committee.

I would like to thank fellow Committee members Kristin Badger, Jock Serong and more recently Michele Fonseca as an observer, as well as Kate Torney our Board Chair, for their valuable guidance and contributions. Our CEO Erin Vincent and COO Joe Toohey do all the work both in delivering these successful staff outcomes, and providing reliable and timely information and insights to this Committee.

Meet the Team

Staff

Erin Vincent
CEO

Simon Cotter
Head of Production

Jamila Djafar Khodja
Senior Programming Manager (to Jan)

Caraline Douglas
Head of Marketing and Engagement

Rick Maxwell Douglas
Technical Supervisor

Darcy Knorr
Marketing and Communications Administrator (Jul to Dec)

Diem Nguyen
Program Producer

Xanthea O'Connor
Senior Producer, Programs and Special Projects

Courtney Percy
Senior Manager, Customer Experience and Ticketing

Sarah Rainbird
Head of Development (from May)

Sam Ryan
Accounts

David Ryding
Director, City of Literature Office

Daniel Scaffidi
Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Tamarah Scott
Senior Producer, Digital Content

Abhishek Singh
Front of House Manager

Gene Smith
Head of Programming

Lauren Taylor
Senior Manager, Programs and Podcasts

Sarah Thompson
Development Consultant (to April)

Joe Toohey
Chief Operating Officer

Michelle Tyson Clark
Company Secretary

Pranati Narayan Visweswaran
Program Administrator

Panda Wong
Communications Officer, City of Literature Office

Indi Wild
Executive & Reception Coordinator (to Dec)

Board

Kate Torney OAM
Chair

Marcus Fazio

Julie Pinkham

Jamila Rizvi
(to Apr)

Jock Serong

Chaman Sidhu
Deputy Chair

Kristin Badger
(from May)

Front and Back of House

Aiesha Amaya

Ashley Stirling

Brad Lacey

Callum McKinnon

Charlotte Kerekes

Edvard Christie

Felix Tobin

Gabrielle Downes

Gina Cameron

Greta Ryan

Hannah Wu

Indigo Tait-Atkin

James Stepien

Jaris McCall

Jay Crossman

Jenny Cheng

Franklyn Hudson

Joel Keith

Yoni Shemesh

Jose Eveline

Oscar Clark

Sally Hicks

Sam McDonald

Sumaiya Hoque

Interns

Darcy Knorr
Marketing Intern (March to June)

Message from the Audit and Risk Committee Chair, Chaman Sidhu



In 2025 the first full year of The Wheeler Centre's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan was successfully delivered, including against our strategic goal of building financial sustainability. Significant milestones included achieving positive net operating income and building retained operating earnings. There was also a substantial year-on-year improvement in donations and sponsorship, which was vital in enabling delivery of vibrant events and programs supporting the literary community.

A full review of The Wheeler Centre's risk policy, appetite, framework and processes was delivered, resulting in a fit-for-purpose and balanced approach to managing risk, with accountability owned across the management team.

It was very pleasing to see the literary community enhanced by the Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival, now operating independently after having initially been supported by an auspice arrangement with The Wheeler Centre.

These significant financial and operating achievements have been made possible by the whole team, and especially through the effort and leadership of Chief Operating Officer Joe Toohey, whom the Committee thanks profusely. I also thank my fellow Committee members Kristin Badger and Marcus Fazio, in particular for their important role in overseeing management of The Wheeler Endowment Fund.

Operating activities

Operating income increased by \$802,142 in 2025, driven by an increase of \$802,996 in sponsorship and development. Events and facilities income also grew, by \$24,987.

Government grant income was steady. Recurrent annual funding from the Victorian Government was \$1.54 million in 2025, the same amount as 2024 and representing the bulk of government support for the period.

Operating expenses grew by \$350,060. Overall building costs increased by \$203,302, driven by one-off IT projects and device upgrades, increased in general building services costs, and equipment upgrades. There were also some increases in staffing expenditure (+\$111,417) compared to 2024, with a number of new roles supported by increased philanthropic contributions.

Non-operating activities: The Wheeler Endowment Fund

The Wheeler Centre maintains a separate reserve for the Wheeler Endowment Fund, which is funded by a gift from the Planet Wheeler Foundation. The endowment is managed by an independent investment fund manager. The Deed governing this gift provides that the returns from the Fund can only be used for the development and provision of high-quality, additional programming, and that The Wheeler Centre adopts an investment policy which seeks to maintain the purchasing power of the capital sum.

At 31 December 2025, the balance of funds held in the Wheeler Endowment Fund was \$12.17 million. Withdrawals in 2025 totaled \$242,788 for additional events.

City of Literature Office

The City of Literature Office supports Melbourne's UNESCO City of Literature status, with financial support from Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council. The Wheeler Centre auspices the Office under a long-standing memorandum of understanding, by employing its Director, administering the income and expenditure of the Office, and providing in-kind assistance to support the Office.

Grants received from Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council are first recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until the funds are used for the operation of the Office, at which point The Wheeler Centre's performance obligation is fulfilled.

Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival

Blak & Bright is a First Nations literary festival based in Melbourne. It is a multi-day festival celebrating the diverse expressions of First Nations writers.

In September 2021, The Wheeler Centre entered an auspice agreement with Blak & Bright. Income received for Blak & Bright was first recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until the funds were used for the operation of the Blak & Bright. This arrangement concluded on March 31, 2025, as Blak & Bright become an independent organisation.

Operations

The Wheeler Centre's net operating result was a surplus of \$151,031 in 2025 (2024: deficit of \$301,051). Net operating revenue does not include transfers made from the Wheeler

Endowment Fund for operating activities, which totaled \$242,788 in 2025.

Retained operating earnings reached \$365,454, improving from an accumulated deficit of \$57,173 in 2024.

The net result from all transactions after depreciation and amortisation of \$47,964 was a surplus of \$730,668 (2024: \$653,547). Investment returns from the restricted-use Wheeler Endowment Fund comprised \$594,479 of this amount (81% of the total surplus).

Balance sheet

Net assets of The Wheeler Centre amount to \$12.43m (2024: \$11.70m) at the end of 2025.

The Wheeler Endowment amounted to \$12.17m, up from \$11.76m in 2024.

Current assets increased 125% to \$2.38m and total liabilities increased by 83% to \$2.21 million. Cash as of 31 December 2025 was \$2.09m. Of this, \$179,586 comprises restricted funds for the City of Literature Office, and \$1.64m was income in advance (this income-in-advance represented 74% of total liabilities at year-end).

Chaman Sidhu
Chair, Audit and Risk Committee Chair

Summary of Results 2025

Financial Performance	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
NET INCOME FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
OPERATING REVENUE		
Creative Victoria – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	1,541,600	1,541,600
Creative Victoria – Premier’s Literary Award Grant	319,616	299,000
City of Melbourne – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	50,000	55,049
Creative Australia	28,043	74,722
Event & Resources Income	897,517	872,530
Sponsorship & Donations	1,199,816	396,820
Reimbursements & recoveries	5,309	38
Total operating revenue	4,041,901	3,239,759
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Employee Benefits Expense	(2,064,788)	(1,953,371)
Prize Money	(368,193)	(384,500)
Public program	(557,856)	(542,767)
Marketing and Promotions	(226,030)	(215,218)
Building Operations	(508,874)	(305,572)
Administration	(165,129)	(139,382)
Total operating expenses	(3,890,870)	(3,540,810)
Net Income from Operating Activities	151,031	(301,051)
NET INCOME FROM NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Interest Received in the Bank	33,122	17,126
Endowment Funds Flow		
The Wheeler Endowment Investment Portfolio Movement (Restricted)	351,691	769,058
Distribution to Operating Activities	242,788	300,000
Endowment Funds Flow	594,479	1,069,058
Net Income from Non-Operating Activities	627,601	1,086,184

NET RESULT FROM AUSPICE PROJECT

City of Literature Office

Government Grants – City of Literature Office	309,043	285,221
Project expenditure – City of Literature Office	(309,043)	(285,221)

Blak & Bright Festival

Government Grants – Blak & Bright Festival	-	308,911
Other income – Blak & Bright Festival	49,671	34,384
Project expenditure – Blak & Bright Festival	(49,671)	(343,295)

Net result from Auspice Project

0 **0**

COMPREHENSIVE RESULT

Net result before depreciation	778,632	785,132
Depreciation and amortisation	(47,964)	(131,586)
Net result after depreciation	730,668	653,547

COMPREHENSIVE RESULT

730,668 **653,547**

Financial Position	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
ASSETS		
Total current assets	2,375,344	1,054,059
Total non-current assets	12,270,109	11,854,984
Total assets	14,645,453	12,909,043
LIABILITIES		
Total current liabilities	2,170,099	1,182,682
Total non-current liabilities	41,165	22,840
Total liabilities	2,211,264	1,205,522
Net assets	12,434,189	11,703,521
TOTAL EQUITY	12,434,189	11,703,521



Helen Garner, Chloe Hooper and Sarah Krasnostein in conversation with Raf Epstein at The Mushroom Tapes: Conversations about a Triple Murder Trial. Photo: Shannyn Higgins.



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas



CREATIVE
VICTORIA

