

Annual Report 2020



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

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Message from the CEO



What a privilege it has been to be appointed to lead Melbourne's preeminent literary Centre into its second decade. And what an interesting time – in the middle of a worldwide pandemic – to begin that journey! Of course, with all

great challenges, comes opportunity and while Covid-19 has turned much of what we knew on its head, like so many others in the sector, we've learned to expect the unexpected, to be nimble and adaptive and stay positive in the face of adversity.

I'm so very proud that we didn't have any staff losses due to the pandemic, despite being ineligible for JobKeeper. That's a testament to the entire team's ability to refocus and adapt, to recalibrate their work, and to learn new skills to be able to produce great content in different formats. I want to pay special homage to all the staff who remained steadfast in their commitment to the work and delivered 67 life-sustaining conversations and programmes that so many told us helped them through the isolation of lockdown.

Never before have we been reminded more of the importance of community and the adage – together we're stronger. To that end, we pooled resources and, in turn, also broadened our scope and reach to new audiences and communities. We were enriched by partnerships including PEN International, Australian Poetry, State Library of New South Wales, Writers Victoria, The Stella Prize, Emerging Writers' Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival, Refugee Council of Australia, Melbourne Writers Festival, The Other Film Festival and Arts Access Victoria; and regional partner Women's Health Goulburn North-East, and thank everyone involved for making such strong alliances under such extraordinary circumstances.

A very big part of the Centre's mission is to support writers and other creative artists. The losses to creative practitioners through Covid was devastating. Already on precarious footing with the average annual income of Australian writers being under \$15,000, having bookshop events, teaching and other income generating opportunities cancelled made it even more imperative for us to deliver on our mission to provide paid opportunities and commissions for writers and artists. I am pleased to be able to report that a total of 228 local and international artists took part in Wheeler Centre events, each paid at professional rates. Of these people appearing on stage or online, 59 were LGBTQIA+, 46 were First Nations, and 111 were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We also featured 54 emerging artists, and 10 artists under 19 years old – a demographic we are ever-more committed to working with.

In addition to those programmes, we also produced 98 original podcast episodes, including 24 episodes of Sally Warhaft's extraordinarily timely series on how Australians responded to the pandemic, *The Leap Year*. There were 22 episodes of *Take Home Reading*, and 10 episodes of *Pill Pop*. In total 69 artists (excluding regular hosts) were featured on the Centre's podcasts. Not to mention all the mentoring of Australia's next generation of creative practitioners that went on regardless of the pandemic.

In fact, the list of the Centre's achievements in this year that was, far outweighs the length we have here to outline them! It was an extraordinary year for everyone, but we made a lot of magic out of the challenges, and I very much look forward to seeing all we can achieve in the year ahead.

Caro Llewellyn CEO

Message from patrons – Maureen and Tony Wheeler



The Wheeler Centre was launched into Melbourne's cultural and literary life and evolved to become the centre for an ongoing hybrid mix of live and digital events, by people with vision and imagination. Maureen and I were lucky enough to be invited to be part

of this from the outset and whilst we thought it *could* be a great thing, when the concept for the Wheeler Centre was first pitched to us, we had absolutely no idea that it would grow to become such a Melbourne icon. The truest test of an icon is to imagine what life was like before it existed. For Melbournians, the Wheeler Centre feels like it has simply always been there, it filled a hole no-one knew existed,

and has become embedded in the culture of the dynamic, vibrant, city that is Melbourne.

The Wheeler Centre is committed to reaching as wide an audience as technologically possible, whether it is regional, interstate or international. If there's a single comment about the Centre that sums up the impact it has had, it is from people from other cities asking 'why don't we have a Wheeler Centre?' We hope that's a question they will be asking even more emphatically in the years to come; it feels like every day there are more questions – environmental, cultural, political, social, you name it – and the Wheeler Centre will continually evolve to ask those questions and lead the conversations that might just, sometimes, find the answers.

Message from the Chair



My third year as Chair of the Wheeler Centre had some unexpected challenges, faced by all arts and cultural organisations. It was a time when the critical importance of knowing that we had the support of the Victorian Government at Minister

level and through Creative Victoria, the strength, wisdom and commitment of the board of directors and the Centre's incredible staff and their agility to move to digital formats meant we could continue to do what we are good at – staging events that introduce controversy and contest of ideas through books, writing and writers.

It was also a time of changing of the guard at the top with the departure of Michael Williams and the appointment of a new CEO to lead the Wheeler Centre. Caro Llewellyn commenced in July 2020 in the midst of Covid-19 lockdown. The board were highly engaged in our CEO selection and are delighted with the appointment. Caro will be known by many as the former Artistic Director and CEO of Sydney Writers' Festival where she more than doubled audiences to 65,000 and has been widely acknowledged as the person to change the persona of Australian literary festivals from quaint, niche events to real broad-based happenings. After her success in Sydney, she was recruited by Salman Rushdie to direct the festival he founded for the human rights organisation, PEN. There, in New York, she dramatically increased and diversified audiences of the PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature.

After that, she had a one-year contract to produce The New York Public Library's million dollar centennial celebration before being recruited by Columbia University to establish an international literary festival for their campus in Paris. She's worked with the prestigious *New York Review of Books* and also directed a Festival of European Literature. Caro is a published author – most recently of the Stella Prize shortlisted memoir, *Diving into Glass* – and had a long stint in publishing too, so she comes with an unusual breadth of knowledge about the sector and international expertise that we couldn't pass up.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Wheeler Centre pivoted quickly to digital formats and presented a busy calendar of events touching the homes and minds of a wide range of audiences and participants. Critical to the strategy of the Centre is our intention to reach a wider demographic and to present events relevant to schools and young people.

Together with the 2020 - 2021 Australian Children's Laureate, Ursula Dubosarsky, in three online events presented in partnership with the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation – *Do Teens Still Need Books?*, *Agents of Choice* and *By the Book* – the role of parents and publishers, how teens can build good reading habits and what the current reading landscape is like for teens were explored.

In line with the Centre's strategic goals, there was a strong focus on partnerships with other cultural organisations, arts festivals, Universities and new venues. The Centre partnered on two events with the Refugee Council of Australia, *Australian Foreign Affairs* and The University of Melbourne, Melbourne Writers Festival, Emerging Writers' Festival and the Stella Prize to name a few.

A diverse range of presenters and an expansion in audience reach were achieved with the first of the Centre's new Broadly Speaking series featuring the distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson discussing the 20th anniversary of her work of Australian First Nations scholarship, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*. Former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard also discussed her new book, co-written with renowned development economist Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Women in Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons* that expanded our reach beyond our local audiences.

I welcome your engagement in the world of books and ideas as we face political, environmental, social challenges and the Wheeler Centre is bold in bringing discourse on these to you both in person and online.

It is an honour to serve as Chair of the Wheeler Centre. It is an honour to work with an engaged and hardworking staff and board. I thank board members sincerely for their participation on the board and our board committees for giving a great deal of their time in an honorary capacity.

I also acknowledge and thank Maureen and Tony Wheeler for their ongoing contribution to Melbourne's cultural and arts organisations and to the Wheeler Centre.



Susan Oliver AM FAICD Chair

About the Wheeler Centre



Mission

The Wheeler Centre exists to drive the development and celebration of literature in Melbourne and beyond, and fosters broad public engagement in books, writing and ideas.

We aspire to be nationally and internationally renowned as a leading institution for the art of conversation, and a champion of the transformative power of informed public discussion and debate.

Principles

The Wheeler Centre pursues a variety of activities underpinned by six principles which express the Centre's aspirations as a leading Australian literary arts and cultural institution. They give shape to our creative initiatives and drive relationships with audiences and the community.



Championing Writers and Writing

We celebrate the contribution Australian authors make to our cultural and intellectual life. We offer new channels for writers to engage with readers, aim to make it easier to live and work as a professional writer in this country, and promote the achievements of writers across all genres. Writers are the backbone of Australia's literary reputation; their work permeates and enriches society.



Elevating Public Conversation

We are dedicated to supporting and strengthening conversations throughout the community. We aim to raise the act of public conversation to an art-form and be a major catalyst for engaged cultural discourse in Australia. We are a key facilitator for the conversations that matter for engaged citizens: these conversations enrich lives, change mindsets, and build social cohesion and identity.



Exemplifying Inclusion and Accessibility

We are dedicated to the principle of universal accessibility. We strive to reach the broadest communities possible and are committed to embracing linguistic and cultural diversity on stage and in our workforce. We programme eclectic and inclusive subject matter and literary styles that appeal to as wide an audience as possible and deliver our programme in accessible locations across Melbourne and Victoria, with a growing focus on digital content for national audiences. As a central tenet of accessibility, around seventy percent of the Centre's year-long programme is free and over seventy percent is filmed for digital broadcast.



Supporting the Literary Sector

We aim to be Australia's leading literary organisation and a hub for Melbourne's vibrant writing sector. In this capacity, we support the health and vitality of the entire writing and publishing ecosystem. From individual writers and small literary organisations to publishers, booksellers and readers, we support our partners, colleagues and stakeholders to create their best work.



Engaging Audiences

Conversations require multiple voices and perspectives. Writers develop new vocabularies, hone their argument and test character; audiences probe ideas, and ask questions that expose dark areas to light. Together this constantly evolving community advances knowledge and recommits to a culture of analysis, curiosity and connection. We endeavour to engage audiences through a variety of channels that embody our commitment to dialogue.



Future Proofing our Approach

We are building a national and international reputation as a high performing and unique cultural institution. Our achievements to date have required significant resources and an accelerated mode of operating. In the next stage of its life, the Centre will continue to be ambitious and innovative while consolidating the means required to do so. We must maintain our current level of output, build capacity for new ventures, and ensure that we have created the best possible conditions for the future.

The first decade



Since inception the Wheeler Centre has held **2422** public conversations and events, giving **4672** speakers income and a platform for their writing and ideas and payment for their participation in our programme.



To date we have supported **187** Hot Desk Fellows from Victoria and around Australia. Over **718** writers have been employed as judges and readers for awards and writers schemes to date.



In addition to **1383** videos of live-stream talks, performances and interviews, we also offer over **1548** podcast episodes, alongside more than **380** longform and **2350** short-form articles.



70% of Wheeler Centre events are free each year. Furthermore, **70%** of events are available digitally for anyone to access online.



Seven literary organisations are housed in the Wheeler Centre hub. More than **358** other arts and community organisations have utilised the building facilities for their own endeavours.

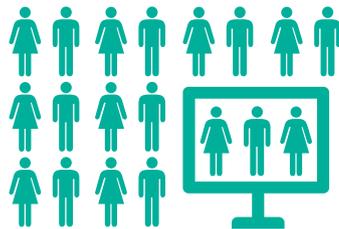


441,026 audience members joined the Centre's conversations over the last ten years. In 2020 **72%** of audience members resided in metropolitan Melbourne, **12%** located in regional Victoria, **15%** interstate and **1%** internationally.

2020 snapshot



67 live and digital events in a range of formats, giving **194** speakers income and a platform for their writing and ideas.



22,926 audience members joined in public conversations in person or online during Covid-19 restrictions across the year.



In a year where digital events dominated the arts and cultural landscape, the Wheeler Centre's YouTube content generated **1,232,251** views up by **57%** in 2019. The hourly watch time increased year on year by more than **72%** with a total of **304,297** hours.



The Centre's digital audience had a global reach – **27%** US, **11%** UK, **11%** Australia – and skewed younger in age demographics than our regular in-person audience from previous years (**43%** are 25-44 years olds).



In a year where organisations faced many challenges and opportunities, **49%** of the Wheeler Centre's events took place in partnership with other major cultural institutions, community groups, festivals and arts organisations.

The year in review



The Wheeler Centre is dedicated to championing the transformative power of conversation and informed public debate, showcasing some of the world's brightest thinkers. In 2020, this was truer than ever. In February, we hosted the **2020 Storytelling Gala** celebrating the Wheeler Centre's tenth birthday. Centred around the topic 'Hindsight', the evening featured a glittering line-up with each guest a speaker from galas past. The night included performances from Alison Lester, Jack Charles, Archie Roach, Gregory Phillips, Eddie Ayres, Cate Kennedy, Alice Pung, Sinéad Stubbins and more. And in early March, we hosted a conversation with former executive secretary of the United Nations and architect of the 2015 Paris Agreement **Christiana Figueres** and leading Australian thinker Ross Garnaut on climate change solutions.

While Covid-19 presented challenges in late March and saw the Centre close its doors temporarily, it also offered the organisation the opportunity to fine-tune and further expand our digital activities. Conscious of the fact that our digital presence was the only entry point for audiences to connect with the Centre during lockdown, we worked to ensure we were equipped to deliver high-quality event livestreams, videos and podcasts. During the lockdown period, we recalibrated the technical setup to ensure the digital audience experience was accessible, modernised, and easy to navigate; we converted cancelled events to digital experiences by restructuring the content to podcast episodes, written pieces and livestreams; we introduced the 'Name your price' initiative for many events, ensuring financially accessible price points for all; and we presented new voices innovatively, creating more paid work and publication opportunities for writers, podcasters and storytellers.

Looking back on 2020, we were still able to host an exciting line-up of events — both online and offline — despite the challenges our sector faced.

The Wheeler Centre presented



67 live and digital events in a range of formats — panels, in-conversations, experimental digital events — more than one a week



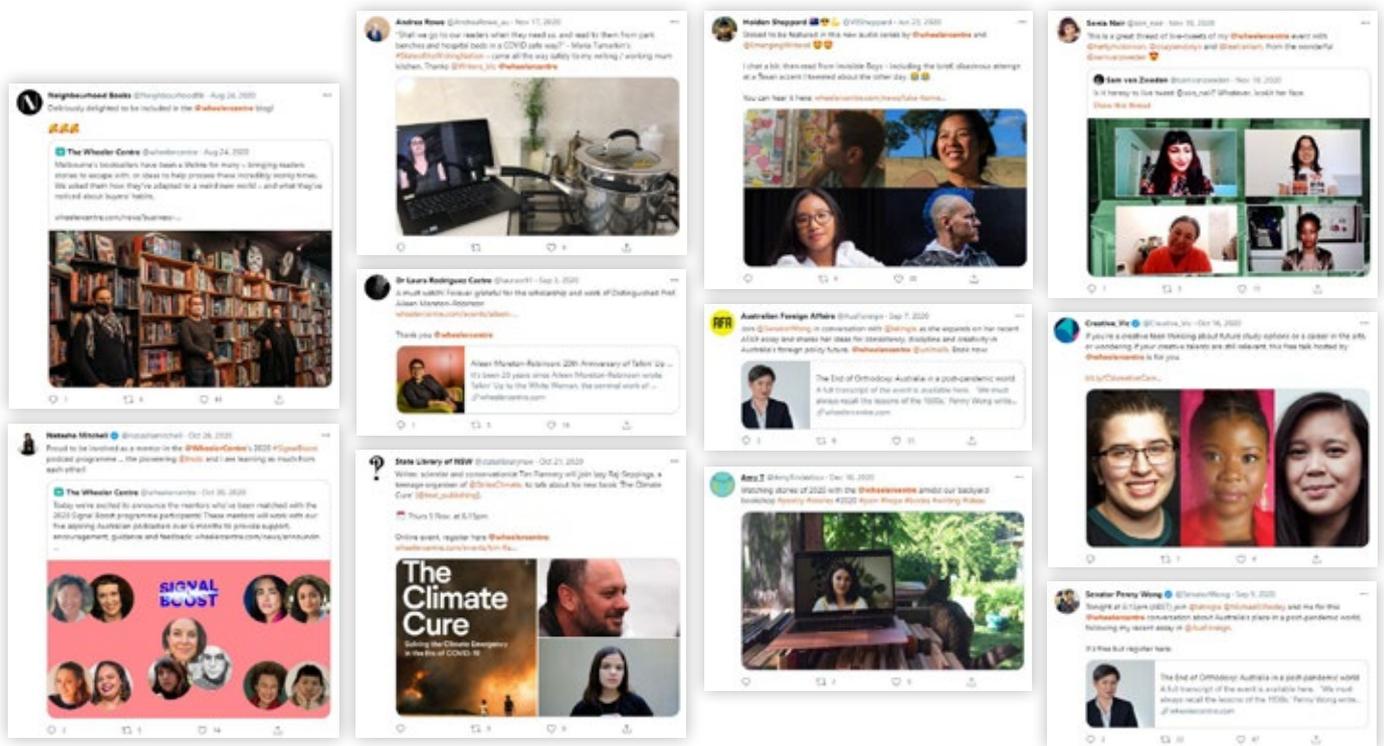
83 videos of events and content to watch



98 podcast episodes including *Pill Pop*, *The Fifth Estate*, and *The Leap Year*



50 short-form news articles



Crucially, this agility enabled the Centre to publish high-quality content that responded innovatively to the moment. In July, the Wheeler Centre initiated a new short-form audio series, **Take Home Reading**, offering Australian writers with new books the opportunity to promote their work. In August, the Centre introduced **Broadly Speaking**, a digital fortnightly feminist conversation series with local and international speakers, enjoyed by thousands of viewers worldwide.

We were proud to begin this new series with an in-depth conversation with **Aileen Morton-Robinson**, hosted by Fiona Nicoll. Their conversation celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Moreton-Robinson's book *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, the work of Australian First Nations scholarship that exposed the blinding whiteness, and the serious limitations, of Australian feminist thought.

And in October, the Centre released **The Leap Year**, a thrice-weekly podcast series which explored the impact Covid-19 has had on Australians' lives, presented by journalist and host of the popular Fifth Estate event series, Sally Warhaft.



Highlights



From left: Chloe Higgins, Rhett Davis, Charmaine Papertalk Green, S. Shakthidharan, Premier Daniel Andrews, Helena Fox and Christos Tsiolkas
Photo: Hashem McAdam

Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

Each year the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards are a hugely successful celebration for the sector and kick off the Awards season. Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister Martin Foley announced the awards at MPavilion on Thursday 30 January, and were joined by over 350 guests including writers, publishers, key stakeholders and donors.

The overall winners of the \$100,000 Victorian Prize for Literature were S. Shakthidharan and Associate Writer Eamon Flack for their play *Counting and Cracking*, which also received the \$25,000 Prize for Drama.

The Prizes for Fiction, Non-Fiction, Poetry, Writing for Young Adults, Unpublished Manuscript and People's Choice Award were awarded to Christos Tsiolkas, Christina Thompson, Charmaine Papertalk Green, Helena Fox, Rhett Davis, and Chloe Higgins respectively.

The Awards celebrate the best contemporary Australian writing and are administered by the Wheeler Centre on behalf of the Premier of Victoria.

The Wheeler Centre Storytelling Gala: 2020 Hindsight



In February 2020, we celebrated the Wheeler Centre's tenth birthday with a storytelling gala. Over its ten years of existence, the Wheeler Centre has become many things: a place for conversation, a place to meet, a place to write. A place to ask, learn and disagree.

It was a big decade, and because we're not immune to a pinch of nostalgia, we invited a glittering line-up of speakers – one from each Wheeler Centre storytelling gala across the past decade – to reflect on the theme of hindsight.

At a sold-out event at the Athenaeum Theatre, Alison Lester, Jack Charles, Archie Roach, Gregory Phillips, Eddie Ayres, Cate Kennedy, Alice Pung, Sinéad Stubbins, Nevo Zisin and Sally Warhaft shared stories both big and small, tender and rueful, funny and profound.



Yanis Varoufakis: Debt, Disobedience and Democracy



An economist, author and self-described libertarian Marxist, Varoufakis rose to international fame in 2015 at the height of the Greek financial crisis, when he led international negotiations with Greece's creditors in efforts to stave off onerous austerity measures. Since resigning from Greek parliament, he's co-founded the pan-European cross-border group Democracy in Europe Movement 2025, written a book about economics (*Talking to My Daughter About the Economy: A Brief History of Capitalism*) and launched a new international progressive movement with Bernie Sanders.

In March, he joined award-winning business journalist Nassim Khadem at the Athenaeum Theatre to talk debt, disobedience and democracy.



Partner events

Events in partnership with the Refugee Council of Australia



In June, together with the Refugee Council of Australia, we hosted the official launch of Refugee Week with On 'Welcome': Migration, First Nations and Refugee Communities, a deep dive into the parallels and intersections between Indigenous and refugee rights. This event was curated by director, creative producer and playwright Grace Edward and hosted by Shabnam Safa featuring speakers from Australia's First Nations and refugee communities.

Words Without Borders: An Evening of Poetry and Spoken Word showcased the talents and stories of brilliant poets from across the country. Curated by Eritrean storyteller Manal Younus, the celebrated Eritrean storyteller who now calls South Australia home, this special online event featured emerging and established artists Lujayn Hourani, Hani Abdile, Flora Chol and Awale Ahmed who shared words of both freedom and exile.



Julia Gillard: Women and Leadership in partnership with Melbourne Writers Festival



In August, former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard discussed her new book, co-written with renowned development economist Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Women in Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons*. Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala addressed vital questions for our future: what biases and barriers do women in power face? How does this affect their leadership performance? And how can we bring about true gender equality when it comes to politics and power?

Drawing on both writers' very different perspectives and experiences, *Women in Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons* is rich in both anecdote and research, and features in-depth interviews with Jacinda Ardern, Joyce Banda, Michelle Bachelet, Hillary Clinton and others.

In this riveting conversation that received 2,492 active streams hosted by journalist Patricia Karvelas, Gillard discussed her own leadership trajectory and what collaboration with Okonjo-Iweala taught about gender bias, politics and the long road to equality.



Events in partnership with Australian Children's Laureate Foundation and the 2020–2021 Australian Children's Laureate, Ursula Dubosarsky

Together with the 2020–2021 Australian Children's Laureate, Ursula Dubosarsky, in three online events — *Do Teens Still Need Books?*, *Agents of Choice* and *By the Book*, — we asked: how can we help teens build good reading habits? What is the current reading landscape like for teens and how can we do better? And what's the role of parents and publishers?

Presented in partnership with the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation, these online events delighted old and young readers alike.



Table Read: *Death in Brunswick* in partnership with Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF)

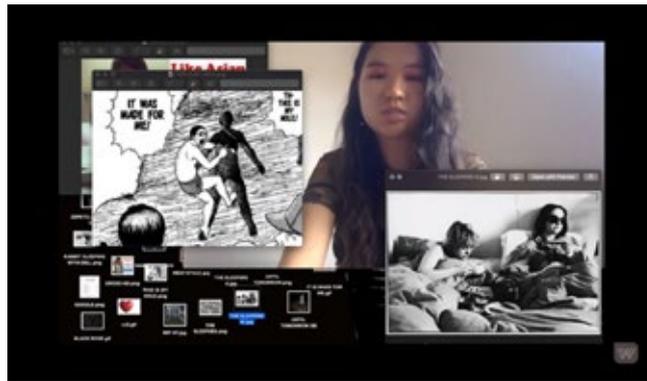


Before *Muriel's Wedding*, *He Died with a Falafel in his Hand* and *The Castle* lit up Australian screens, there was the 1990s comedy classic *Death in Brunswick*, best remembered for its iconic grave-digging scene. That scene is among the most famous in Australian cinema. It's a sequence of dark absurdity that captures not just a moment and a mood in Melbourne, but also a certain grisly comic sensibility unique to Australian filmmaking.

Directed by John Sheedy and produced remotely under Victoria's Stage 4 Covid-19 restrictions, this special event marked the thirtieth anniversary of *Death in Brunswick* with a green-screen Zoom extravaganza – a digital reading of the film script as part of the MIFF 68½ Talks program.



Emerging Writers' Festival Programme Launch: Digital Nostalgia



We often speak of the internet as the Bad Place, but it's also vital for many people to access resources and services, entertainment and community – perhaps now more so than ever. From discussion forums and MSN crushes to TikTok choreographies and parties on Zoom, online spaces continue to offer a gathering place for when we can't physically be together.

Hosted by the Emerging Writers' Festival's Artistic Director Ruby-Rose Pivet-Marsh and Program Coordinator Millie Baylis, this special launch event saw festival artists Alistair Baldwin, Jamie Marina Lau and Panda Wong, reflect on the times they found (or failed to find!) connection, chaos and care online.



The 2020 Stella Prize Announcement and Winner in Conversation event

The Stella Prize was founded to elevate the writing of Australian women with an annual \$50,000 literary prize. Now in its eighth year, the Stella Prize is a fixture of Australia's literary culture – driving books sales, sparking book clubs and boosting the careers of women and non-binary writers.

In April, we partnered with the Stella Prize to present a digital Award Ceremony to announce the 2020 winner, hosted by Patricia Karvelas and featuring guest speaker former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. We also presented the first conversation with the winner, Jess Hill, discussing her winning book *See What You Made Me Do* with chair of the judging panel Louise Swinn.



S. Leo Chiang: *Our Time Machine* in partnership with AIDC, Asia TOPA and ACMI

Maleonn is among China's best known contemporary conceptual artists, and also the son of accomplished artists. His mother, Tong Zhengwei, was an actress and his father, Ma Ke, was the artistic director of the Shanghai Chinese Opera Theatre.

The award-winning documentary from director S. Leo Chiang, *Our Time Machine*, is an exploration of creativity, memory and mortality with this exceptional artistic family at its centre. We hosted a screening of *Our Time Machine* at the Capitol Theatre followed by a conversation with the director, Chiang hosted by Beverley Wang.



Regional events

Women at the Edge: History and Beyond & Economics and Beyond



In partnership with Women's Health Goulburn North East, we delivered events to regional audiences ranging across topics including women's health and housing, disaster relief and financial empowerment.

For International Women's Day in March, we invited a range of historians and experts to share little-known stories of the women who have shaped the recent and distant past in History and Beyond. And in November, Economics and Beyond saw community leaders and experts discuss women's roles in today's economy, and how the pandemic turned what was already a gendered gap of economic inequality between women and men into a gaping chasm.



Kate Grenville: A Room Made of Leaves



Melbourne-based writer Kate Grenville is a long-time favourite among readers. She's the author of the international bestseller *The Secret River*, and other novels including *Sarah Thornhill*, *Lilian's Story*, *Dark Places* and *The Idea of Perfection*.

A Room Made of Leaves marks the author's return to the novel form. It's a work of historical fiction posing as a memoir written by Elizabeth Macarthur – wife of John Macarthur, the notorious Second Fleet settler and wool baron of early Sydney. Moving between fact and fiction, Grenville uses Macarthur's story to unravel common notions of women of the past – and to delve into the attraction of false stories.

In this online conversation hosted by Larissa Behrendt in partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, award-winning Grenville talked about her new novel, her writing and her extensive career.



Event series

Books and Ideas at Montalto



The Books and Ideas at Montalto series focuses on bringing the best Australian writing to the Mornington Peninsula. In 2020, we converted two Montalto events to live-stream format, allowing audiences to tune in from all over Australia.

Guests included writer and human rights advocate Arnold Zable, author of *The Watermill*, in conversation with comedian Sami Shah; and short story writer Alice Bishop, author of *A Constant Hum*, in conversation with broadcaster Elizabeth McCarthy.



The Fifth Estate



In The Fifth Estate series, in-house news anchor Sally Warhaft hosts guests from the world of politics, culture, journalism and international relations to dissect pressing questions of policy, power, and public affairs. Each conversation is recorded and released through the popular Fifth Estate podcast, allowing people all over the country to enjoy expert analysis of key contemporary debates.

Guests included Bob Brown, George Megalogenis, Malcolm Turnbull, Joshua Wong, Tom Porteous, Kevin Rudd, Paul Adler, Marian Wilkinson and Judith Brett.



Event series

Wheeler Kids



The Wheeler Kids series — designed for the younger reader in your life — brings together an immersion in literacy with a nurtured love of books and reading.

In July, we gave our youngest readers the opportunity to try their hand at filmmaking. Orson Welles did it with *Citizen Kane*. Jordan Peele did it with *Get Out*. Greta Gerwig did it with *Lady Bird*. Sometimes the first movie you make is just a straight-up masterpiece. Why not get started early?

In a practical workshop, Fiona Hardy — author of *How to make a Movie in 12 Days* — shared her movie-making tips before participants got stuck into screenwriting exercises of their own.

And in September, we hosted an online workshop with acclaimed designer, illustrator and maker Beci Orpin, about her inspiring new book *Take Heart, Take Action*. After a reading of the book by the Little Bookroom's Leesa Lambert, Beci talked participants through the process of creating their own illustrations and posters that encourage everyone to make a positive impact on the world.



Wheeler Education



The new Wheeler Education series aims to bring the world of books, writing and ideas to teens — and teens to the worlds of books, writing and ideas. In this series we explore the challenges facing young people, and the bold ways they're envisioning their own futures. We hosted three highly engaging online events particularly targeted at teens in years 9–12, and their educators.

In *Politics and the Power of Plain Speaking*, the 2019 VCAA Plain English Speaking Award (PESA) state winner and the 2020 winner, Tierney Khan presented their powerful, prize-winning speeches and chatted with two-time PESA finalist, Oscar Pearce.

During lockdown in Melbourne, three teens — Jayda Franks, Chelsea Allen and Freddie Russon — talked frankly about self-care strategies during Covid-19 and beyond with Lucy Thomas from Project Rokit in the online event, *Care Packages*. Speakers shared practical tips, tricks and pitfalls; discussed how they're caring for friends, family members and community; and talked about how they're maintaining hope for the future.

In *Creative Careers*, the panelists discussed the value and flexibility of creative skills and critical thinking and talked frankly about the risks and difficulties of careers in the arts. What do creative careers look like today? How do artists and arts workers juggle their creative pursuits with their need to make a living? Is it possible the economic and social upheavals in the post-Covid-19 world will change the way we think about creative industries?



Broadly Speaking



Building on the success of the 2019 Broadside Festival, Broadly Speaking was introduced as a new digital event series of deep dives into feminism and gender.

Featuring brilliant local and international feminist thinkers, the 2020 series commenced with distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson discussing the 20th anniversary of her work of Australian First Nations scholarship, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman* to a global audience of 1800+ people. Later events saw authors Mieko Kawakami and Fernanda Melchor discuss the limitations and possibilities of translation and radical representations of womanhood in fiction; food writers Julia Busuttill Nishimura, Ixta Belfrage, Hawa Hassan, Sonia Nair, Lee Tran Lam, Hetty McKinnon, and Osayi Endolyn discussed quarantine cravings and authenticity and appropriation in food media; and Ann Goldstein and Mary Norris examined women in translation and Goldstein's work as Elena Ferrante's translator.

The Broadly Speaking series is proudly supported by Krystyna Cambell-Pretty AM and family.



Digital events

Miranda Tapsell: Top End Girl



Actor, writer and producer Miranda Tapsell is a beloved figure of Australian screen culture. She wrote, produced and starred in the hit 2019 film *Top End Wedding*, which challenges perceptions and on-screen representations of First Nations women. With her close friend, comedian and playwright Nakkiah Lui, she hosts the podcasts *Pretty for an Aboriginal* and *Debutante: Race, Resistance and Girl Power*.

In May, Tapsell joined us to talk about her lifelong passion for storytelling, community and culture, in conversation with Lui.



Briggs: Our Home, Our Heartbeat



Adam Briggs is a Yorta Yorta rapper, record label owner, comedy writer and actor. He's part of the ARIA-winning hip hop duo A.B. Original, and outside of music, he's appeared regularly in ABC TV shows including *Black Comedy*, *Cleverman* and *The Weekly* with Charlie Pickering.

In May, Briggs joined Gamilaroi and Dunghutti writer, and co-founder of *Tiddas 4 Tiddas* podcast Marlee Silva to talk about his children's book *Our Home, Our Heartbeat* and how it addresses the importance of Indigenous resilience, honours legends past and present, and salutes emerging generations of the oldest continuous culture on earth.



Fire Front: First Nations Poetry and Power Today

Fire Front is an anthology of First Nations poetry, edited by Gomeri poet, essayist and legal academic Alison Whittaker. Featuring both established and emerging poets, it showcases the breadth of First Nations poetic voices, alongside essays from leading Aboriginal writers and thinkers who offer their own reflections on the power of the form.

Our special digital showcase event was hosted by Whittaker, and featured a Welcome to Country from N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, followed by poetic readings from Tony Birch, Charmaine Papertalk Green, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi, Jeanine Leane, Natalie Harkin, Lorna Munro, Raelee Lancaster, Luke Patterson and Evelyn Araluen.

These formidable First Nations poets delivered stunning performances, before Whittaker shared insights into how this remarkable anthology came together.



Iconic Duos: The Next Chapter Writers and Mentors



This year, we partnered with the Emerging Writers' Festival to curate and facilitate two online panel discussions featuring the recipients and mentors from The Next Chapter writers' scheme. This was in lieu of bringing the participants together at the Sydney Writers' Festival in May, which was cancelled due to Covid-19.

Hosted by the Wheeler Centre's programming manager, Veronica Sullivan, three Next Chapter recipients and their mentors – Arthur Bolkas and Arnold Zable, Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi and Ellen van Neerven, and Jean Bachoura and Maria Tumarkin – discussed the varied forms support for emerging writers can take, and the unique qualities of writing mentorships.



Writing Blak



First Nations writers are at the forefront of the most exciting writing being produced on this continent today, subverting creative forms and decolonising Australian literature. At an online event hosted by Evelyn Araluen, four emerging First Nations writers from The Next Chapter writers' scheme – Jasmin McGaughey, Racheal Oak Butler, Lorna Munro and Meleika Gesa-Fatafehi – discussed the creative process, writing for Blak and settler readerships, and how they respond to expectations of genre, character and identity.



We Are Nemeses: Talking Experimental Comedy

Vidya Rajan and Alistair Baldwin are Nemeses, a newly formed and already dysfunctional comedy duo. The pair had their Melbourne International Comedy Festival show cancelled due to the pandemic, but their toxic and unnecessary creative collaboration stopped for no one!

In this live event converted to digital livestream, Vidya and Alistair attempted to grab their viral moment and rise to the never-ending demands of content creation. Mildly interactive, and characteristically self-deluded, this event featured a DIY pandemic sitcom, sketches and chaos, followed by a hilarious panel discussion about experimental comedy hosted by Scott Limbrick and featuring Chloe Alison Escott.



Digital events

Fathoms: Exploring the World in the Whale



Rebecca Giggs's debut book, *Fathoms: The world in the whale*, is a riveting work of narrative non-fiction, combining science reporting with personal reflections and lyrical prose.

In an immersive event, Giggs led viewers through a digital scavenger hunt – including conversation, archival photography, video footage, whale music and more.



The End of Orthodoxy: Australia in a post-pandemic world



At an online event presented in partnership with *Australian Foreign Affairs* and the University of Melbourne, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong discussed the magnitude of change Australia faces in the Covid-19 era and its aftermath. In conversation with Laura Tingle, Wong discussed the serious threats posed by a fraying global system and macho nationalism, to our economy, to our security and our national interests.



Richard Flanagan: The Living Sea of Waking Dreams

In partnership with Fane Productions, we were proud to present one of Australia's finest living writers, Richard Flanagan, in conversation with award-winning journalist and broadcaster Jennifer Byrne for his only Australian event to celebrate the release of his surreal new novel *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams*.

The Wheeler Centre was selected as the Melbourne partner for this special online event and sold 43% of the 1,400 total tickets.

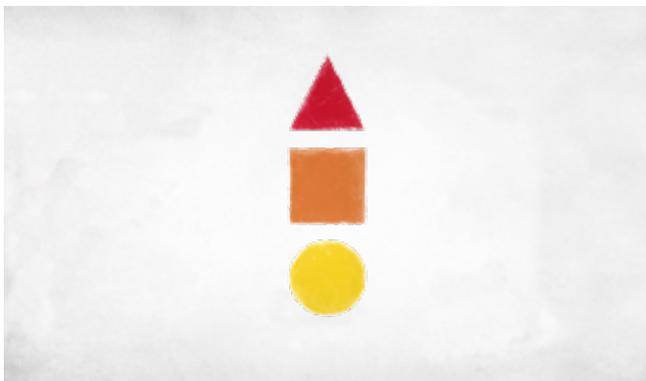


State of the (Writing) Nation: Maria Tumarkin



The State of the (Writing) Nation is an annual address from a prominent Australian writer. It's a chance to reflect on what's happening, and where we're heading in Australian literature and publishing.

In her astute 2020 address, Maria Tumarkin proposed a less anodyne, more urgent way of speaking up for writers and readers in today's society. Together with Jean Bachoura, who was mentored by Tumarkin through the 2018 Next Chapter scheme, and host Christos Tsiolkas, she tackled the complex topic of what it means to be a writer in Australia today. This event was presented in partnership with Writers Victoria, with all proceeds supporting the Disadvantaged Writers Fund.



Fire Flood Plague: Making Sense of 2020

December saw the release of a new essay anthology *Fire Flood Plague*, featuring leading Australian writers attempting to make sense of the chaos of 2020; a year that began with raging bushfires, then descended into Covid-19 confusion.

In this virtual event hosted by the anthology's editor Sophie Cunningham, contributors including Melanie Cheng, Kim Scott, Gabrielle Chan and Jess Hill grappled with the many strange, disturbing and uplifting moments of 2020.



Fringe Debate: Should Culture Be Cancelled?



At this raucous digital debate presented in partnership with Melbourne Fringe Festival, we asked: should culture be cancelled? Hosted by Jean Tong and Lou Wall, panellists Evelyn Araluen, Ash Flanders, Vidya Rajan, Moira Finucane, Stuart Daulman and Zoë Coombs Marr asked: Is the problem with cancel culture ... culture? In a silly and satirical debate, they discussed political correctness, impossible expectations and the worth of the arts in today's world.



Make It New: 2021 and Beyond

Make it New: 2021 and Beyond was the final event of the Wheeler Centre's tenth year. While 2020 didn't quite turn out the way anyone had imagined, we saw out our first decade in style. With the help of a star-studded line-up including Paul Kelly and Bruce Pascoe, this digital event saw brilliant speakers reflect on these momentous times, and share their hopes for what might lie ahead. They reflected on what we learned about ourselves and our communities from living through the changes of 2020, what they hoped to leave behind, and what new insights and resolutions – hazy or crystal clear – would propel us into 2021 and beyond.

We were honoured to open with a Welcome to Country from N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, followed by poetic performances from Paul Kelly and Jazz Money, and speculations and imaginings from Bruce Pascoe and Trent Dalton.



Digital activity

Signal Boost



Now in its third year, Signal Boost is a well-known initiative that builds on the Wheeler Centre's legacy of supporting storytellers in the medium of podcasting. Generously supported by the Ian Potter Foundation, we match up Signal Boost recipients with experienced mentors and provide them with equipment and access to workshops led by Australia's leading audio professionals to help them realise their podcast goals and dreams.

This year the five Signal Boost recipients were Cherie Minniecon, Karishma Luthria, Linh Do, Maddison Miller, and Nicole Pingon. Our 2020 Signal Boost mentors included Jess Fairfax, Masako Fukui, Natasha Mitchell, Rudi Bremer, Sherre DeLys and Timmah Ball.



Pill Pop



Produced, hosted and edited by Silvi Vann-Wall and Izzie Austin in partnership with the Wheeler Centre's Signal Boost programme, *Pill Pop* takes you on a road trip through chronic-illness country. Izzie was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes as a young kid, and Silvi was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis as a teenager.

The show's first season was co-produced by Beth Atkinson-Quinton and Jon Tjhia at the Wheeler Centre. Silvi Vann-Wall and Izzie Austin received advice and production support from Bec Fary.



Take Home Reading

Take Home Reading is a short-form audio series for readers and writers hosted by the Wheeler Centre's programming coordinator Stella Charls. Shining a spotlight on Australian writers with recently released books, each instalment, introduced listeners to a writer who shared a little about what they had been reading lately, before they performed a short reading from their latest work.

22 episodes of *Take Home Reading* featured work from writers such as Rawa Arjah, Katarina Bryant, Chris Flynn, Erin Hortle, Ronnie Scott, and many more.



The Leap Year



The Leap Year was a podcast about the stretching, shrinking days of 2020, and the impact Covid-19 had on Australians' lives. Presented by Sally Warhaft, *The Leap Year* took a closer look at the reality of lockdown and 2020 through interviews with Australians who had their own story to tell about this very long year – from a police officer with previously unimaginable power to a school student navigating a stop-start year, and a writer with unexpected reserves of solitary time and an emergency doctor reflecting on compassion.

Through its 24 episodes, *The Leap Year* presented listeners with accounts of dread, loss, mistakes and malaise as well as humour, ingenuity and resilience.

The Leap Year was produced by the Wheeler Centre's Events Manager and Digital Producer Mia McAuslan.



Poems Spoken and Sung by Paul Kelly



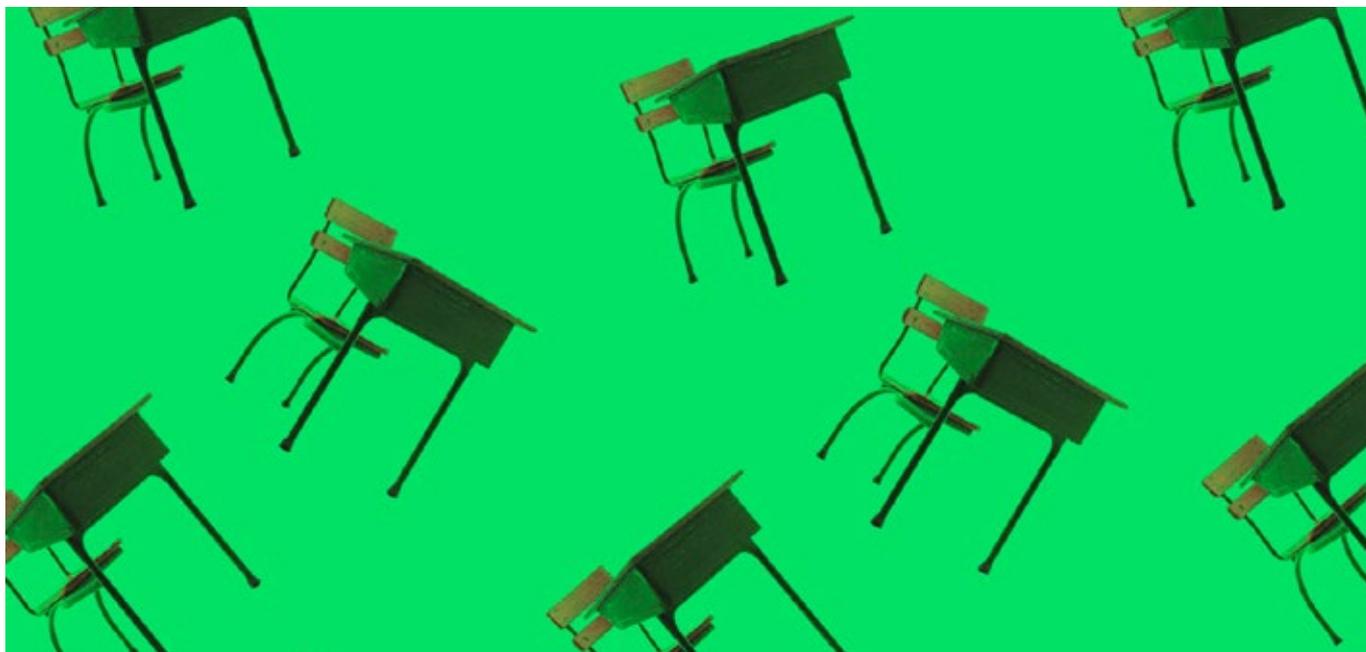
Commencing in December, the Wheeler Centre recorded and released a series of intimate recordings of iconic Australian songwriter Paul Kelly reciting some of his favourite verses by poets old and new.

From Dorothy Porter and William Blake to Rumi, Ovid, Ono No Komachi, Ali Cobby Eckermann and Alison Croggon – poets of many stripes, and many centuries, have shaped the life and work of iconic Australian singer/songwriter Paul Kelly.

The poems were drawn from the 2019 anthology, *Love is Strong as Death: Poems Chosen by Paul Kelly*. The recordings were released through until the end of 2020 into early 2021 culminating in a live event with Paul Kelly at the Malthouse Outdoor Stage in conversation with writer and poet Allison Croggon.



Initiatives to support the next generation of storytellers



Hot Desk Fellowships

For the ninth year the Wheeler Centre's Hot Desk Fellowships were made possible by the generous support of the Readings Foundation. Hot Desk Fellowships provide emerging writers the space to write and create. 20 writers took up fellowships throughout the year, and an additional Playwright Hot Desk took up to an emerging female or non-binary playwright, with thanks to the Just Pretending Theatre Group.

All fellows received a \$1000 stipend. Ordinarily, they would also have received access to a dedicated workspace at the Wheeler Centre over a ten-week period however, due to public health restrictions throughout 2020, we were unable to provide physical hot desks for the writers. Despite these challenges, we prioritised finding alternative ways to support the recipients – including through the creation of a dedicated online channel to share their writing and seek support from each other and the Wheeler Centre throughout the year, which was received with great enthusiasm. With restrictions lifting in 2021, the 2020 Hot Desk Fellows will have the opportunity to access their desks in the Wheeler Centre in 2021 and enjoy the opportunity to meet and network with the building's resident organisations.

The writers who participated in this year's fellowships were;

Mama Alto	Leah Muddle
Alex Creece	Rashmi Patel
Monikka Eliah	Allee Richards
(playwright fellow)	Ariel Ries
Lou Garcia-Dolnik	Lobna Rouhani
Veronica Heritage-Gorrie	Vince Ruston
Natasha Hertanto	Darlene Silva Soberano
Ruby Hillsmith	Diane Vu
Georgia Kartas	Dženana Vuci
Kim Lam	Rae White
Nellie Le Beau	Panda Wong

Cher Tan, a 2019 Hot Desk Fellow and a judge for this year's fellowship reflected on the process.

“What a corker of a shortlist! It was an absolute delight going through this year's Hot Desk applications – there were so many promising entries, so it was no mean feat whittling it down to the final 21. It was especially exciting to see the imaginative, multi-form projects that comprised many of this year's entries: experimental poetry, fantasy comics, magical realist theatre and more, plus strong samples of literary fiction and creative non-fiction. As a previous Hot Desker, I understand what it means to have the opportunity to devote uninterrupted time and space towards a project ... It also goes without saying that being able to access funding and support made my writing project seem less like a pipe dream and more of a reality. Congratulations to all!”





The Next Chapter



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

the Aesop Foundation

The Next Chapter

Presented by the Wheeler Centre with support from the Aesop Foundation, The Next Chapter gives ten outstanding writers the time and space to write, and a 12-month mentorship with an experienced writer. In 2020, we introduced new measures to support the cohort of ten emerging writers taking part in The Next Chapter writers' scheme, who were part of a community that was among those hit hardest by the pandemic.

We partnered with the Emerging Writers' Festival to curate and facilitate two online panels featuring the recipients and mentors. This was in lieu of bringing the participants together at the Sydney Writers' Festival in May, which was cancelled due to Covid-19.

Across the year The Next Chapter scheme offered additional opportunities to attend online workshops, writers' retreats and other professional development sessions run by writers' centres and writers' festivals. During the open for entries period, we held a live-streamed Q&A session for prospective applicants.

Applications for the third year of the scheme were open from 3 June until 10 August and a total of 632 entries were received. Eight experienced writers and editors were tasked with devising an initial longlist, from which the four judges – Nam Le, Alison Whittaker, Tony Birch and Maria Tumarkin – selected ten successful recipients.

The 2020 Next Chapter recipients were announced online on 16 November. Our intake included; Sharlene Allsopp, Bigoa Chuol, Lujayn Hourani, Allanah Hunt, Angelina Hurley, Tim Loveday, Khin Myint, Mia Nie, Oliver Reeson and Jonathon Slottje.

2019 Next Chapter recipient Arthur Bolkas offered this reflection on his experience of the scheme:

"The improvement in my work since receiving The Next Chapter award last year is difficult to describe. Not only have I learned more about writing in this time than over my entire life previously, but I can now say with confidence, 'I am a writer!' Recognition, affirmation, support, a mentor's guidance and inspiration – all of this has given me self-belief, which is everything."

2019 Next Chapter recipient Jasmin McGaughey offered this reflection on her experience of the scheme:

"The Next Chapter opportunity has truly helped my writing goals. The staff have been so supportive and helpful. Every aspect of the program so far has been a benefit to my learnings and confidence, from the writing retreat to the mentor and prize money. The most impactful aspect has been to have a First Nations mentor. Aunty Melissa has been so supportive and given invaluable feedback on my writing."



Financial review

Message from the Audit and Risk Committee Chair

The Wheeler Centre is an independent not-for-profit arts organisation that recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary. The 2019/2020 financial year brought with it significant challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic created a financial crisis for the Centre and the wider arts community. The Board and the Audit and Risk committee worked with the newly appointed CEO, Caro Llewellyn, to review and adjust the Centre's operations to remain financially viable during the period of the lock down.

The new CEO was able to reposition the Centre's operations without staff losses – all of whom continued to provide critical support during the closure of our premises. There was an increased focus on the monitoring of our cash flow and financial position and we took the opportunity to review the Centre's strategic plan, financial systems and processes to prepare for a "new normal" return to live events programming. The Centre has continued to be financially supported by the State and Federal government, our donors, benefactors, and audiences. The following summary of results provides a snapshot of our 2020 financial operations. It is based on the content of the Centre's independently audited Annual Financial Statements.

To improve transparency the summary of results differentiates between the Wheeler Centre's operating and non-operating activities. The non-operating item includes the investment activities from the Wheeler Endowment Fund. This summary also differentiates between the Wheeler Centre's operating activities and City of Literature Office's operating activities.

John Gibbins, ARC Chair

Operating activities

The Wheeler Centre was significantly impacted by Covid-19 with the closure of its live events space to the public commencing on 16 March. Ordinarily, up to 50% of the Wheeler Centre's revenue is self-generated and reliant on live events and an open and thriving Centre. As a result of the loss of more than three quarters of the year's onsite activities, revenue from events and associated income streams are 82% below F2019 levels, and support from sponsorships and donations are 63% below last year's figures. With the impact on activity and revenue being so significant, the Wheeler Centre sought to reduce expenditure, whilst adhering to the Victorian Government's Industrial Relations Framework's policy decisions to support the Victorian economy through initiatives such as; providing rent relief for the Moat café and resident organisations and timely payment to writers and speakers involved in online events and programmes.

As a Victorian government agency, the Wheeler Centre was not eligible for Federal Government support packages such as the JobKeeper scheme or the Covid-19 Creative Economy Support Package. However, the Centre adhered to the Victorian Government's Industrial Relations Framework designed to protect employment for Victorian workers and the Centre's employee expenses have remained at a level consistent with the prior year.

In recognition of the impact of closing the Centre to live audiences, the Wheeler Centre was provided with Creative Victoria's Strategic Investment Funds Stage 1 and Stage 2 to support its operations and adapt new business models through a comprehensive strategic review.

Non-operating activities: The Wheeler Endowment Fund

The Wheeler Endowment Fund funded by a gift from the Planet Wheeler Foundation has been placed into a separate reserve. The endowment is managed by an independent investment fund manager.

The Deed governing this gift provides that it should be used for the development and provision of high-quality, additional programming.

Investment income from the Wheeler Endowment Fund fell by 76% compared to the previous year, due to a combination of the impact Covid-19 had on investment markets and a significant reduction in funds as reserves were used to fund additional programmes in 2019, such as the high-profile Broadside Festival.

City of Literature Office

The Wheeler Centre has had a long-standing memorandum of understanding with Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council to support the City of Literature Office (the Office) and the position of the Office Director. The memorandum of understanding stipulates Creative Victoria and Melbourne City Council have agreed to provide financial support for the operation of the Office and the employment of the Director with the Wheeler Centre providing in-kind assistance to support the Office. All income and expenditure of the Office is administered through the Wheeler Centre.

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.

Financial performance

Operations

The Centre's operating revenue reduced by over 20% during the year which contributed to a deficit of \$129,971 from our operating activities.

The net income from investments was a deficit of \$1,296. The net result from all transactions before depreciation was a deficit of \$131,267. After depreciation and amortisation of \$112,011 the overall result for the year was a deficit of \$243,278.

Balance sheet

Net assets of the Wheeler Centre amount to \$9,716,011, of which \$9,910,159 relates to the Wheeler Endowment Fund property, plant, and equipment amounted to \$25,927 and computer software and website amounted to \$ 35,839.

Financial assets increased by 2% to \$2.33 million. However, of the \$1 million held in cash, almost 90% are restricted funds that cannot be used to support operating activities – leaving \$1.33 million in general funds to cover working capital requirements.

Total liabilities decreased by 1% to \$2.588 million driven predominantly by a reduction in long service leave liabilities.

Summary of results FY2019 – FY2020

	FY2020	FY2019
Financial Performance	\$	\$
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	240,000	265,000
Creative Victoria – Project Grants	13,476	-
Creative Victoria – Strategic Investment Fund Stage 1	207,680	-
Creative Victoria – Strategic Investment Fund Stage 2	59,375	-
City of Melbourne – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	60,000	60,000
Australia Council for the Arts – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	103,030	102,010
Other Government Grants	2,724	-
Event & Resources Income	179,767	1,026,596
Sponsorship & Donations	130,330	352,147
Distribution from Foundation Funds	281,755	336,250
Other Income	121,488	13,845
Total operating revenue	2,941,225	3,697,447
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Employee Expenses	(1,893,312)	(1,943,136)
Event Generated Expenses	(227,598)	(1,193,872)
Prize Money	(403,750)	(418,276)
Marketing and Promotion Expenses	(57,837)	(266,632)
Digital Publishing Expenses	(32,730)	(78,216)
Operating Expenses	(208,201)	(239,952)
Facilities Expenses	(247,768)	(305,129)
Total operating expenses	(3,071,196)	(4,445,214)
Net Income from Operating Activities	(129,971)	(747,767)
NET INCOME FROM NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Interest Received in the Bank	4,741	4,470
Philanthropic Funds Flow		
The Wheeler Endowment Investment Portfolio Movement (Restricted)	182,865	2,017,005
Distribution to Operating Activities	(188,902)	(865,000)
Philanthropic Funds Flow	(6,037)	1,152,005
Net Income from Non-Operating Activities	(1,296)	1,156,475
NET RESULT FROM AUSPICE PROJECT		
Government Grants – City of Literature Office	292,422	288,633
Project expenditure – City of Literature Office	(292,422)	(288,633)
Net result from Auspice Project	(0.0)	(0.0)
Net result from transactions before depreciation	(131,267)	408,708
Depreciation and amortisation	(112,012)	(96,729)
Net result from transactions after depreciation	(243,278)	311,979
COMPREHENSIVE RESULT	(243,278)	311,979

Thank you

We are deeply grateful to new and existing partners and the countless cultural partners, booksellers and publishers that we collaborate with across the year to promote books, writing and ideas. The contribution and commitment of the Centre's generous supporters enables us to champion writers, support the literary sector and elevate public conversation locally and internationally. In 2020, more than ever, we are indebted to the sustained support by the following organisations.

Government partners



Melbourne
City of
Literature



Trusts and Foundations

the Aesop Foundation



Major partners



Program partners

creative
partnerships
australia

MONTALTO

VARUNA
The National Writers' House



Regional partners



Accessibility and Inclusion Partners



Diversity Arts
Australia



Resident Organisations



EMERGING
WRITERS'
FESTIVAL



Shaping the Centre's future

Donors

The Wheeler Centre depends on the generosity of individual donors, whose annual contributions sustain our ambitions and enable us to dream big. In 2020, we thank you more than ever. Your ongoing support, loyalty and generosity throughout this incredibly challenging year was deeply felt across the organisation. It has been an uplifting reminder of the centrality of the Wheeler Centre in people's hearts and minds, even in the absence of live events to attend and prolific authors to meet.

In spite of the many challenges brought about by Covid-19, the year 2020 saw the sustained support of loyal and new donors who generously supported the annual giving programme, raising more than \$130,000. Support for the Wheeler Centre helps to build a vibrant community with a passion for books, writing, ideas and smart conversations.

We wish to thank George and Rosa Morstyn for their continued support of The Next Chapter writers' scheme in 2020 as well as their contribution towards purchasing new digital hardware required to support the Centre's pivot to digital programming in response to Covid-19. This generosity enabled the Centre to be agile and respond innovatively to the current moment, programming a digital Fifth Estate series and *The Leap Year* podcast, which both responded directly to the pandemic.

A special thank you to Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and family for their generous contribution towards launching the new Broadly Speaking series, which celebrates female writers, stories and perspectives. In 2020, six digital events featured brilliant local and international feminist thinkers and engaged thousands of audience members worldwide, with more live events scheduled for delivery in 2021.

Donations of any and every size make an impact and help to keep the conversations going. We thank all those who contributed throughout the years whose names are not listed here. We thank you all for being part of our story and giving to the Wheeler Centre.

Patrons

Maureen Wheeler AO
Tony Wheeler AO

Game Changers: \$25,000+

Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and family
George and Rosa Morstyn

Conversation Starters: \$5,000+

Anonymous
Jennifer Gilchrist
Elke Gjergja
Andy and Jill Griffiths
The Hudson Family
Chaman Sidhu
Brigitte Smith
Wendy Whelan

Enquiring Minds: \$1000+

Dr Steve Connors
Glenda De Marinis
Catherine Heggen
Keith Richards OAM
Janet Whiting AM and Phil Lukies
Prof Steven Williams
Sarah Yeomans

Supporters: \$500+

Dr Marianne Broadbent
Michael Cowen
Nikki Gaskell
Elizabeth Loftus
Vanessa Sweeney



Partners

The Wheeler Centre is indebted to the support of Creative Victoria, the Australia Council and the City of Melbourne who remain the Centre's major government funders.

The funding landscape in 2020 saw major shifts, with many grant rounds cancelled, postponed or entirely reconstituted in response to the evolving Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on the Victorian arts and cultural sector.

The Wheeler Centre is indebted to the generosity and adaptability of new and existing funding bodies whose contributions boosted the Centre's resilience as we recalibrated throughout the year to meet the unfolding challenges of Covid-19. This support will future-proof us for many years to come, allowing us to continue to build community around the sharing of literature, ideas and stories.

Thanks to two major grants from Creative Victoria's new Strategic Investment Fund, the Centre was able to upgrade its technological equipment to deliver higher-quality live-stream and video content and repurpose the Performance Space into a professional recording studio. By increasing digital output, the Centre was able to continue programming digital events and podcasts, as well as create paid opportunities for local writers and artists when these were needed most. The Wheeler Centre is proud to have extended its digital capacity to support its activities and those of the resident organisations and other literary partners who have gained access to the studio and equipment for their own programming.

In 2020, the Wheeler Centre secured further multi-year funding through the City of Melbourne's Triennial Arts Programme 2021-2024 as well as a Covid-19 Quick Response Business Grant to support a digital Fifth Estate programme.

Funding partners also showed flexibility and understanding in cases where certain types of programming could simply not be delivered as a result of Covid-19 restrictions. The Wheeler Centre works closely with five regional partners to deliver a dynamic and accessible programme to regional audiences, made possible through support by the Creative Victoria's Regional Touring Grant. In consultation with regional partners and Creative Victoria, the decision was made to postpone this programme until 2021 when events could return to in-person delivery and provide the greatest impact for those living regionally.

We are grateful for the ongoing partnerships with Montalto, Sofitel on Collins, Schiff and Company, JB Were, Meltwater, RTR Productions, Two Birds Brewing and St. Ali Coffee Roasters. These partners support our work and enrich experiences for artists and audiences alike.



Trusts and foundations

In 2020, thanks to the Aēsop Foundation, the third year of *The Next Chapter Writers' Scheme* continued to provide life-changing mentorship, training and funding to support ten budding Australian writers from diverse or underrepresented backgrounds.

The Aēsop Foundation also made a generous contribution to the Wheeler Centre through its newly established 2020 Support Fund, a specially tailored fund to bring relief to existing funding partners through the challenges of Covid-19. This unique funding will enable us to expand on the digital capacity building work already underway and invest in a website redevelopment designed to enhance our digital offering and activities to expand our reach and impact. The Wheeler Centre is deeply grateful for the ongoing support of the Aēsop Foundation whose commitment to championing emerging writers and elevating untold stories enables some of our most impactful work within the sector.

Our most sincere thanks to the Ian Potter Foundation who enabled us to launch the first year of the Signal Boost Podcast Programme, which saw five aspiring podcasters participate in an intensive 6-month mentorship and professional development programme led by some of Australia's most celebrated audio experts. Delivered entirely online, this successful first year marks the beginning of an exciting three-year relationship with the Ian Potter Foundation who worked closely with the Wheeler Centre to support the project's delivery in spite of the limitations brought by Covid-19.

We deeply thank our partners who showed flexibility, enabling the postponement or reimagining of programming where needed. In consultation with the Robert Salzer Foundation, the Wheeler Kids regional programme was postponed until 2021; the Di Gribble Argument was postponed with support from Creative Partnerships Australia; and the Hot Desk Fellowships, annually supported by the Readings Foundation, were also postponed to enable these 21 writers to have the opportunity to work from their own desks at the Wheeler Centre in 2021.

The E.W. Cole Foundation was established as an exciting new funding partner, as the Wheeler Centre launches a new series of annual lectures honouring the life and legacy of the Melbourne literary icon, set to commence in 2021. In addition, the Centre is pleased to be supported by the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund once again, this time by contributing to the in-person delivery of the new Broadly Speaking series. This series, which began digitally in 2020, will continue to present inspiring live conversations centred around feminism as Melbourne's arts and cultural sector reopens in 2021.

Wheeler Centre people

Patrons

Maureen Wheeler AO and Tony Wheeler AO

The Board of Directors

Susan Oliver AM FAICD, Chair
Rebecca Batties
Marcus Fazio
John Gibbins
Will Hayward
Corrie Perkin
Julie Pinkham
Adrian Sculthorpe
Chaman Sidhu
Clare Wright OAM (until April)
Anita Ziemer

Staff

Director Michael Williams (until March) Rebecca Batties (interim March to May) Tony Grybowski (interim May to June)

CEO Caro Llewellyn (from July)

Head of Programming Helen Withycombe (until March)

Head of Marketing and Communications Emily Harms

Head of Development Romy Ladowsky

Head of Publishing Sophie Black (maternity leave)

Head of Operations Gabrielle Ryan

Head of Finance Lucy McNamara (until June)
Melanie Lin (from July)

Office Manager Sally Rosevear

Programming Manager Veronica Sullivan

Programming Coordinator Stella Charls

Special Projects Coordinator Hiroki Kobayashi (until December)

Festival Director Tamara Zimet (until February)

Schools Programmer Bec Kavanagh

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Marketing Manager Shannon Hick

Development Coordinator Brigid Reid

Ticketing and CRM Coordinator Claire Flynn

Publicist Sallie Butler (until October)

Senior Writer/Editor Sophie Quick (until December)

Digital Producer Scott Limbrick

Audio Producer Beth Atkinson-Quinton (from March)

Events Manager Mia McAuslan

Production Manager Johnboy Davidson

Technical Coordinator Jose Eveline

Receptionist Harry Reid

Accounts Sam Ryan

Casual Front and Back of House Team

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Anne Bravos

Bridget Caldwell

Faith Everard

Else Fitzgerald

Bromley Isombard

Clint Hansen

Tamie-lee Hansen

Selwyn Hoffman

Zoe Kaser

Charlie Kerekes

Doni Marmer

Kate McHugh

Leah Jing McIntosh

Theodore Murray

Adalya Nash Hussein

Diem Nguyen

Linh Nguyen

Xanthea O'Connor

Ruby-Rose Pivet-Marsh

Danny Silva Soberano

Cher Tan

Inez Trambas

Billie Tumarkin

Folole Tupuola

Nikita Vanderbyl

Dylan van Oirschot

Nevo Zisin

