



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

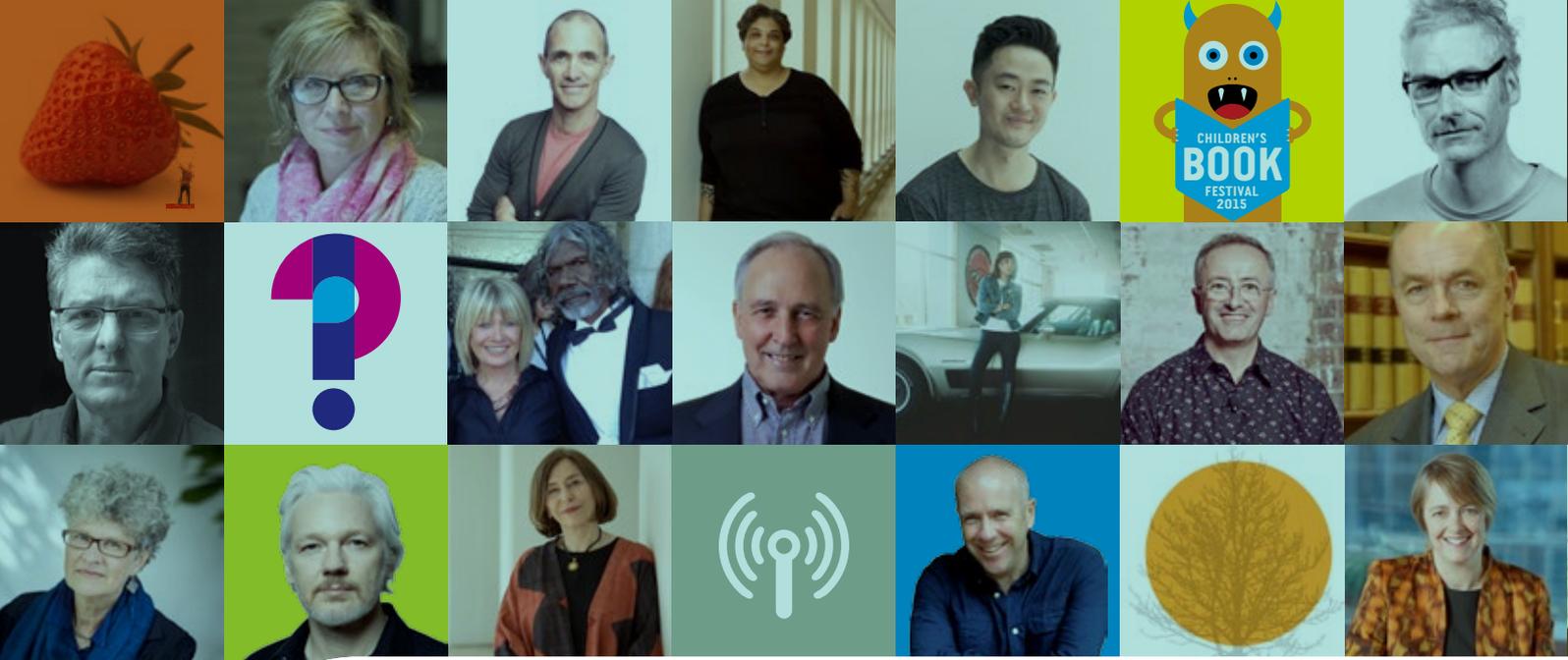
Annual Report 2015





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Message from our director



In February 2015 the team at the Wheeler Centre celebrated our fifth birthday. It felt like a significant milestone: an organisation that hadn't existed only six years earlier had already become an indelible part of the landscape. It feels impossible to remember what Melbourne cultural and intellectual life looked like before there was a Wheeler Centre: it shapes and defines our public sphere in a way that has exceeded our wildest imaginings. And it does it because the writers and thinkers who make up our programme

are endlessly creative, imaginative and thoughtful in what they bring to the Wheeler Centre stage. It does it because our partners – cultural, corporate, philanthropic – help us constantly come up with new ideas and new ways to talk about them. It does it because our audiences are generous and curious and hungry. Insatiably hungry.

So 2015 was a big old slice of birthday cake to celebrate where we'd been and where we're going. We overhauled our website, launched a festival, live streamed events and reinvented the way we approached our events. We've partnered with old friends and new organisations alike. And alongside all that ambition, experimentation and change we continued to present the biggest names in books, writing and ideas from near and far to our loyal audiences.

We're not the newest show in town any more. We don't have to explain what a Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas is every time we step out our front door. But what makes me proud as the Wheeler Centre's director is that we retain the ability to surprise, to challenge and to redefine the nature of our contribution. The dedicated and seemingly inexhaustible team – staff, board, partners, donors and sponsors alike – have my deepest thanks and constant admiration. We love what we do.

Michael Williams
Director



Message from our chair



Imagine having a ringside seat to observe Paul Keating sparring with Kerry O'Brien. Or viewing Julian Assange streamed live from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. Or listening to Helen Garner and Hannie Rayson in conversation. Or watching Richard Flanagan give his first interview since winning the Man Booker Prize. Or being a fly on the wall as Nicola Roxon, Virginia Gay, Tony Birch, Lex Lasry, Bruce Gladwin and Jennifer Byrne present a unique and immersive tribute to *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

These were a mere smattering of marquee events in the life of the Wheeler Centre in 2015. It was the year we celebrated our fifth birthday. The year Andrew Denton presented the Di Gribble Argument and launched our entry into digital commissioning with his 17-part podcast series about death. And the year we introduced The Interrobang, our first ever festival of questions.

As all this activity suggests, the Wheeler Centre continues to add to the life and ideas of Victoria. The Centre presented more than 210 events in 2015, creating a platform for hundreds of speakers and tens of thousands of spectators to participate in one of this state's most robust pastimes – talking. And not only talking: debating, arguing, disagreeing, laughing, explaining and engaging through discussion.

All made possible by the energetic creativity of our staff, the vision of our board and the continued support of Maureen and Tony Wheeler and the Victorian Government.

Eric Beecher
Chairman



About the Wheeler Centre

OUR MISSION

The Wheeler Centre exists to drive the development and celebration of literature in Melbourne and beyond, and to foster 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.



OUR VALUES

Questioning

We foster creativity and distinctiveness. We're prepared to challenge the status quo – to keep asking 'why?', rather than parroting accepted wisdom. We are more interested in getting to the heart of the matter than in presenting neat answers. Asking questions is often the important part.

Collaborative

Conversations require interaction, participation and open-mindedness. We encourage and invite people to do their thinking and deliberating together, to immerse themselves in the tangle of discussion and join us in following the threads that emerge.

Intelligent

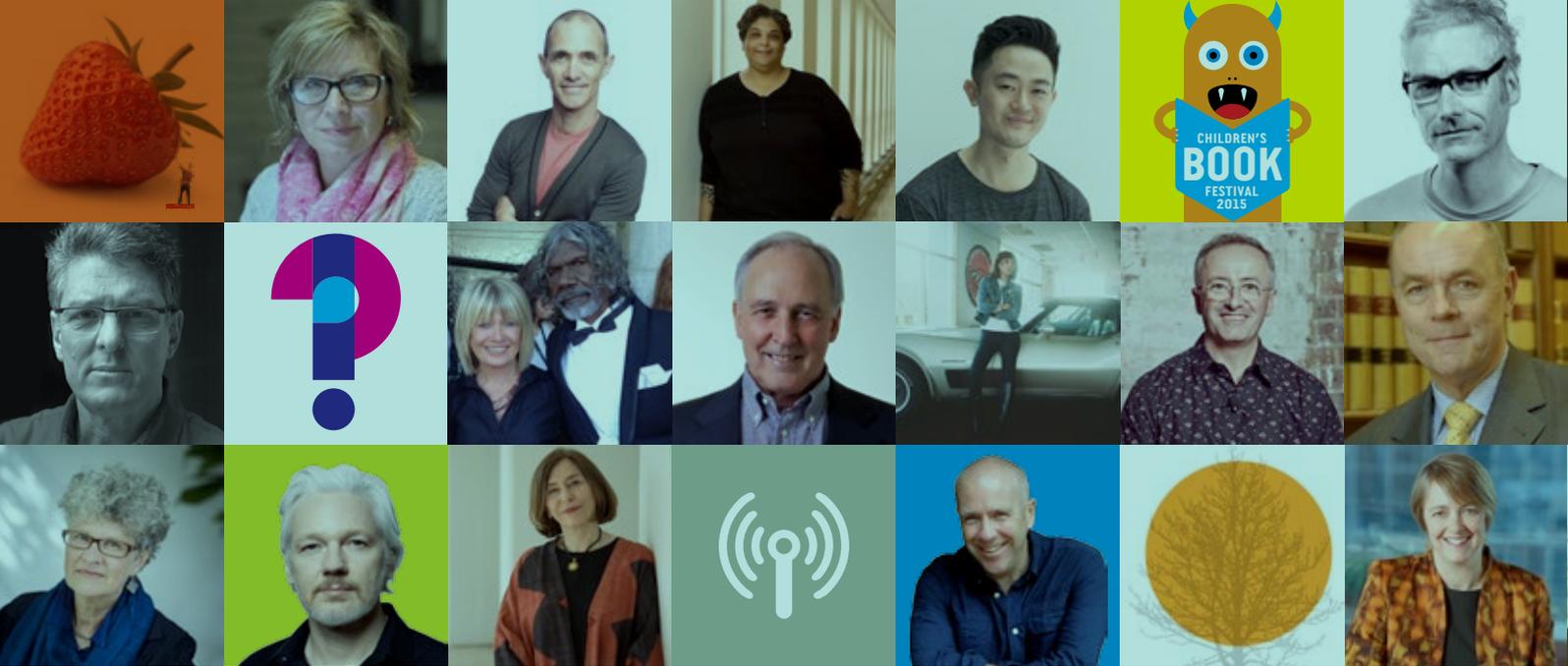
Conversation plants the seeds for learning, creative practice and innovation. We expand (and sometimes alter) people's perceptions by hosting original and meaningful conversations in a variety of forms. We're always learning and evolving, and so is our audience.

Inclusive

We treat our audience, partners, peers and each other with consideration and respect. We embrace diversity, engaging in conversation with audiences of different backgrounds, interests and identities – and aiming to connect them with each other. We passionately believe that we must be open and connected.

Transformative

We have the courage to lead our audience into the unknown, to challenge assumptions, to keep asking questions and remain open to new answers. We see the world in the context of a journey we'll always be half-way through – because there will always be new knowledge and ideas to consider.



OUR PRINCIPLES

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



Championing Writers

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 our society and without them, the Wheeler Centre wouldn't exist.



Supporting the Writing 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.



Elevating Public Conversation

We are dedicated to supporting and strengthening conversations throughout our 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.



Engaging Audiences

Conversations require multiple voices and perspectives. Writers develop new vocabularies, hone their arguments 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.



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. 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 our national audiences. As a central tenant of accessibility, around eighty percent of the Centre's year-long programme is free and over seventy percent is filmed for digital broadcast.



Future-proofing our Approach

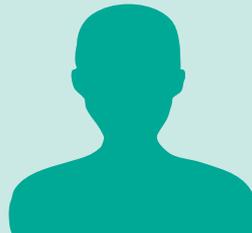
We are building a national and international reputation as a high-performing and unique cultural institution. Our achievements to date have required significant resources and an accelerated mode of operating. In the next stage of our life, the Centre will continue to be ambitious and innovative while simultaneously 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 company's future.



To date



1,616 public conversations and events, giving 2,200 speakers a platform for their writing and ideas.



20 Hot Desk Fellowships in 2015. 80 Hot Desk Fellowships have been awarded to date, supporting emerging writers. 102 writers have been employed as judges for awards. 8 writers were provided creative retreats.

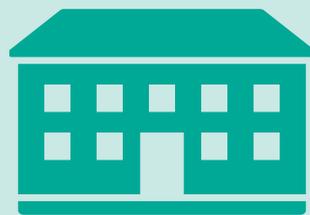


80% of our events are free each year, 70% of our events are available digitally for anyone.

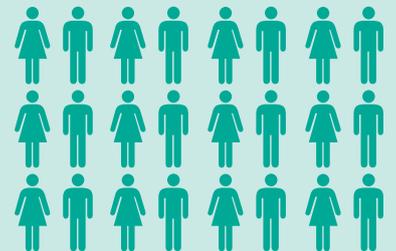
40%



40% of events have taken place in partnership with other major cultural institutions, community groups, festivals and arts organisations.



6 literary organisations are housed in the hub. Approximately 200 other arts and community organisations have utilised the building facilities for their own endeavours.



260,992 audience members joined our conversations with 64% of these audiences located in Metropolitan Melbourne, 27% Regional, 5% Outer Metropolitan Melbourne and 4% from Interstate.



2015 snapshot



41K

Our wonderful community of *Wheeler Weekly* newsletter subscribers reached 41,000.



23,203



33,000



3,071



1,544



881,865 sessions in 2015 (17.46% increase on previous year).

Our website averages more than 73,488 sessions (active engagement) per month. We produced 970 high quality recordings, 1000 podcasts and 2,200 articles online.



12K

12,000 young people and their families attended our annual Children's Book Festival.



Over 3,621 audience members enjoyed the inaugural Interobang: A Festival of Questions. 621 questions were asked online by the public. 26 Australian and international writers and thinkers were engaged across 22 events.



Our podcast series have attracted approximately 39,000 episode page views in 2015 with an average listening time of 6 minutes 39 seconds. 18% of our users were outside of Australia.



2015 We have questions... On the other hand...

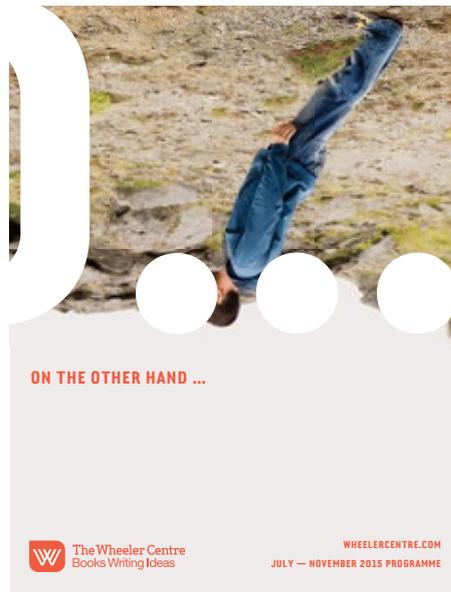
2015 marked the Wheeler Centre's fifth birthday; five years of staging and starting public conversations. Our programme of events for 2015 addressed the heart of what we do: asking well-framed questions that open up conversation, and encouraging further curiosity and questioning.

Biannual programmes released in February and July showcased a selection of what was to follow across the year, allowing us to be responsive to the conversations our audiences wanted to have about the issues of the day.



WE HAVE QUESTIONS ...

In our five years of existence we've learned that the best contributions to the discussion of books, writing and ideas are well-framed questions. Questions open up conversations, and asking questions of one another is how we broaden our understanding of the world. We have questions because we hope that what we do here is the start of something, the beginning of a conversation that's bigger than us.



ON THE OTHER HAND ...

We don't just ask questions just because we are curious. And while the people in our programme of events have answers, expertise and opinions to burn, we are always willing to say 'on the other hand ...' to make room for the answers, expertise and the opinions of others.



Highlights

5TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS: GALAS

To celebrate our fifth birthday the Wheeler Centre programmed a series of galas – each exploring ‘five’ through the world of books, writing and ideas. With a variety of event formats on offer we were able to deepen our engagement with audiences and celebrate the diverse and surprising ways the Wheeler Centre approaches public conversation.

In Five. A Gala Debate on 2020.

On Monday 9 February we began with a unique debate offering two sides, just one team – and nothing less than our future at stake. Where will we be as a society in five years’ time? Should we feel hopeful, or should we feel despair?

Panellists, including Eva Cox, Gregory Phillips and Marita Cheng, made an informed, impassioned case for optimism, countered with an equally persuasive case against it.

On Five. A Gala Night of Storytelling.

The tradition that started it all returned to Melbourne Town Hall on Saturday 14 February with some of Australia’s best writers and storytellers coming together to reflect on ‘five’. From memories of being five to a personal top five list, 11 speakers including Maxine Beneba Clarke, Tim Flannery and Stephanie Alexander entertained the crowd.

For Five. A Gala for five year olds with Julia Donaldson.

Children’s author and entertainer Julia Donaldson, creator of *The Gruffalo*, took young readers on musical and storytelling adventures at two wildly popular events in Melbourne and Geelong.

Principles:





THE INTERROBANG – A FESTIVAL OF QUESTIONS

A new festival from the Wheeler Centre, built on the best questions in the world. On Friday 27 and Saturday 28 November 3,621 people joined us for a feast of frequently unanswered questions at a festival that curated the audience's most controversial, revealing, funny and insightful ideas. Their questions were tackled by our Brains Trust, comprising 28 of the world's most inquisitive writers and thinkers. The Brains Trust featured Cheryl Strayed, Rob Delaney, Benjamin Law, Geraldine Brooks, Adam Liaw, Anne Summers and Yanis Varoufakis.

The public asked 621 questions online. These questions became the basis of 22 events held at various locations in Melbourne including the Athenaeum Theatre, Collins Street Baptist Church and the Wheeler Centre.

Presented in partnership with City of Melbourne and The University of Melbourne

Principles:



THE DI GRIBBLE ARGUMENT 2015 AND BETTER OFF DEAD PODCAST

The Di Gribble Argument is an annual occasion to remember the late publisher, editor and businesswoman Di Gribble and to celebrate her legacy. Over dinner in the Regent Theatre's Plaza Ballroom – and the following day in a free event at the Wheeler Centre – audiences heard a provocative proposition – and considered responses from guests.

In 2015, one of Australia's sharpest minds broached a difficult, deeply personal topic – the argument around how we die. Andrew Denton mounted his argument for not letting the moral, ethical and legal questions prevent us from tackling this most human of issues.



Then, beginning in November, we successfully released *Better Off Dead*, a 17-part podcast series produced in partnership with Thought Fox and Andrew Denton on the following platforms:

- wheelercentre.com/betteroffdead with extended copy, photos, extra interviews, links and a call to contribute stories.
- iTunes, Stitcher, Podcasts.com, Pocketcasts, TuneIn Radio, Soundcloud, Omny, YouTube, social media and other major podcast aggregation apps and networks.

In early 2016 we peaked at #1 for two weeks ahead of the top rating podcast series, *Serial*, in the Australian iTunes Store podcast chart.

The successful podcast series received substantial media coverage – including on *Conversations* with Richard Fidler, Seven's *Sunrise*, Channel 10's *The Project* and *Australian Women's Weekly*. The podcast has also attracted favourable coverage in media/radio industry publications like RadioToday and Global Editors Network.

Principles:





DIGITAL

To assist our programming and showcase our work, a new look **wheelercentre.com** launched in February. With thousands of discussions, written articles and projects, recordings, people and interactions to account for, we worked in collaboration with our website developers, Icelab, to sharpen our focus on making our website inviting, natural and pleasurable to use. Users can now easily browse by topic, explore curated collections, or dive straight into what they're looking for – something to attend, something to watch or listen to, something to read. In December, we added our own discussion platform – inviting our audience to comment and discuss ideas online, together.

From our inception, we have filmed and audio recorded the majority of our live events, so that 70% is available via wheelercentre.com. We now have an unparalleled archive of more than 900 curated events and conversations available digitally.

Increased digital activity is the natural evolution of an organisation committed to being the home of smart and entertaining engagement with books, writing and ideas. The Wheeler Centre sees opportunity for significant growth in our public profile and cultural impact through continued innovation in this area.

In 2015 our pilot digital programming initiatives included specially commissioned podcasts, live streaming from regional festivals, live streamed international guests and digital participation in programming. Over the coming years we see these activities as increasingly stand-alone: not only enhancing or expanding the live experience, but existing meaningfully on their own terms for audiences across Australia and internationally.

Examples of our work in this area throughout 2015 include:

Our inaugural **2015 Festival of Questions, The Interrobang**, had its entire programme directly crowdsourced from a 621-strong digital audience – an unprecedented level of audience participation in programming from a major Victorian institution.

With an increasing focus on promoting our **audio series (podcasts)**, since November we attracted 39,000 podcast episode page views, with an average viewing time of 6 minutes 39 seconds. 18% of our users were outside of Australia. This included elevating our ongoing event-based podcast series such as the Fifth Estate and Good Conversation, Great Wine at Montalto, as well as a dedicated feed for The Interrobang. The podcast *Better Off Dead*, co-produced with Andrew Denton, was our first stand-alone unique podcast series.

We **live streamed panel discussions from the Bendigo Writers' Festival** – featuring Australian authors Kirsten Krauth, Kate Belle, Luke Carman, Alicia Sometimes, Fleur Ferris, Alli Sinclair, John Purcell and Anna George. This model empowers local programmers to create events based on their knowledge and expertise of local audiences, and positions the Wheeler Centre as a facilitator of wider audiences and greater capacity.

We **live streamed a conversation with Julian Assange, direct from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London**, to a booked out audience of 250 at the Wheeler Centre – and 1,500 viewers online. With Assange stuck in legal and political confinement, we created a hybrid physical/digital event which allowed him to discuss his own situation alongside the just-released book, *The WikiLeaks Files*. Taking questions from the floor and from viewers on Twitter, this event created a unique sense of proximity and connection with an elusive, influential figure – and the opportunity for a public conversation of his ideas. The book's publisher, Bloomsbury, were happy to be able to give readers such close access to Assange – and, of course, to book sales.

Principles:





WEATHER STATIONS

The Wheeler Centre continued work as one of five partners in the Weather Stations project, which was established in 2014 and concluded in September this year. This project sought to place writing and storytelling at the heart of conversations around climate change. In 2015, the Wheeler Centre along with its substation – a Year 9 group of 23 students from Footscray City College in collaboration with Tipping Point – worked with appointed writer in residence Tony Birch on this project. The idea was to develop public facing programs, including digital projects, excursions, lectures and workshops, to further promote a focus on climate change through discussion, debate, writing and filmmaking.

A number of events took place across the year that centred around conversations on climate change. A special event in June saw the culmination of the substation project at a student film screening and talk hosted by Tony Birch. The young filmmakers from Footscray City College were given the opportunity to discuss how the Weather Stations project has affected their outlook on climate change and their views on strategies to confront it.

To connect with reading groups around the world and to spark conversation about climate change we engaged in a partnership with CAE Book Groups. Feedback forms were distributed to groups whose chosen text was identified as being relevant to the conversation, and members were asked to indicate how the book made them reflect on the related issue. Books included Ian McEwan's *Solar* and Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*.

Finally, Tony Birch travelled to the Berlin Literature Festival in September to represent the Wheeler Centre and Footscray City College substation. Each of the substations participated in the festival activities as well as several workshops. As part of this activity, the films made by Footscray City College students were screened for the other substations.

globalweatherstations.com

Presented in partnership with:
 Footscray City College
 Free Word, London
 Internationales literaturfestival Berlin
 (The Berlin International Literature Festival)
 Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique), Warsaw
 Tallaght Community Arts, Dublin

Principles:



AFRICA TALKS

In a new series for 2015, Africa Talks explored the issues, challenged our perceptions and teased out the complexities of African-Australian identity, representation and politics. Five events across the year addressed topics such as Australia's relationship to Africa, media reporting and reality, African-Australian identity and cultural prejudice. The series was hosted by award-winning journalist for SBS World News, Santilla Chingaipe, and guests included musician and author Valanga Khoza, poet and storyteller Alia Gabres and radio producer and presenter Stani Goma.

Principles:





THE F WORD

Another new series for 2015, The F Word, asked where feminism is at, in culture and society, with a series of ten events that questioned our assumptions and highlighted areas for change and inclusion.

'Bad Feminist' Roxane Gay kickstarted the series hosted by Maxine Beneba Clarke in March. Media critic and tech blogger Anita Sarkeesian discussed the #GamerGate firestorm and the web series *Feminist Frequency* with Sophie Black. We then looked at romance, Aboriginality, class, parenting, disability, religion, sport and science from a decidedly feminist perspective.

Principles:



GOOD CONVERSATION, GREAT WINE: THE WHEELER CENTRE AT MONTALTO

Back for a second year in 2015 the popular series of events at Montalto Vineyard & Olive Grove saw the Wheeler Centre transport a taste of Australia's best writing to the Mornington Peninsula.

On the third Friday of each month from March to November, audiences enjoyed all the elements of the very best dinner party: wonderful guests, good conversation and great food and wine.

Featured authors for the nine events included Hannie Rayson, Kate Grenville, Gideon Haigh, Russel Howcroft and Anna Funder.

Presented in partnership with Montalto Vineyard & Olive Grove.

Principles:



SHOW OF THE YEAR

A Wheeler Centre tradition returned in 2015 to unravel and revel in the delights and lowlights, majesties and travesties of the year that was. Sugar-tongued songbird Casey Bennetto and a bevy of the nation's most charmed and charming entertainers and writers – Santilla Chingaipe, The Listies, Marc Fennell, Penny Wong, First Dog on the Moon, Nicholas J. Johnson, Toby Halligan, Jane Caro, Clare Wright, Tina Del Twist and Sami Shah – farewelled the year in style ... one month at a time through story and song.

We marked the the WW1 ANZAC Centenary, covered leadership spills and and political helicopter thrills. We paid tribute to Joan Kirner, and got excited about Australian Netflix. From heatwaves and climate change to Australia's response to the Syrian refugee crisis and a Christmas singalong to boot, the Show of the Year was richly funny, poignant, and everything in between.

Principles:





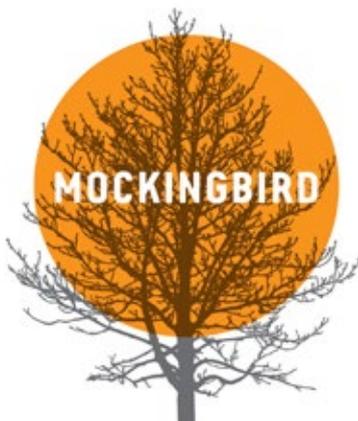
MOCKINGBIRD

To greet the release of Harper Lee's long lost *Go Set a Watchman*, we presented a unique, immersive tribute to its legendary companion, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. First published 55 years ago to immediate acclaim (and a swift Pulitzer gong), *To Kill a Mockingbird*'s influence runs deep – through the legal and political establishment as well as the literary world.

In one unique evening, we pulled apart and rebuilt *Mockingbird* with the help of six writers, thinkers and artists, and playwright Anne-Louise Sarks. They took us through the key moments of the story, exposing its incisive relevance through discussions of its major concerns: themes such as race, class and gender, and laws written and unwritten.

As Atticus Finch once said, 'you never really understand a person ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it'. To that end, Nicola Roxon, Lex Lasry, Tony Birch, Virginia Gay, Jennifer Byrne and Bruce Gladwin traversed multiple moments and characters from the text as they celebrated a legacy – and a completely rare occasion – half a century in the making.

Principles:



CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

The Wheeler Centre's annual Children's Book Festival, in partnership with State Library Victoria, has run since 2011. The festival has established itself as the major children's book event on the national calendar, allowing children and families an opportunity to celebrate the joy, enjoyment and power of books and reading.

In 2015 more than 12,000 young people and their families celebrated the wonderful world of children's literature and storytelling. Activities on the lawns of the State Library and inside the Wheeler Centre and State Library included: meet the author and illustrator sessions, curling up in a beanbag to listen to stories in the storytelling pavilion, singing and dancing to musical acts, creating a Giant Book of Miscellaneous Oddities and being surprised by the Snuff Puppets.

Popular writers and illustrators joined the festivities including: Hazel Edwards, Shaun Tan, Gabrielle Wang, Tristan Bancks, Oliver Phommavanh, Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton, Marc Martin, Nicki Greenberg, Ursula Dubosarsky, Andrew Joyner, Mitch Vane, Davina Bell and Allison Colpoys.

Presented in partnership with State Library Victoria.

Principles:



GEORGE ORWELL'S 1984: A LIVE READING

At a special event presented by the Wheeler Centre and Melbourne Festival, we revisited George Orwell's classic dystopian novel of power and politics with a live reading in a very apt setting – the Legislative Assembly Chamber in Victoria's Parliament House.

Over nine hours, more than 30 political commentators, politicians past and present, satirists, journalists and celebrities took their place at the Speaker's chair to bring Orwell's *1984* to life in a marathon relay reading. More than 450 people attended on the day to hear the likes of Barrie Cassidy, Gillian Triggs, Don Watson, Graeme Simsion, Jess McGuire, Tony Birch, Heidi Victoria, Adam Bandt and Julian Burnside.

Presented in partnership with Melbourne Festival.

Principles:





VICTORIAN PREMIER'S LITERARY AWARDS

Awards play a vital role in honouring literary achievement by Australian writers. The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards are administered by the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas on behalf of the Premier of Victoria.

There are eight award categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Drama, Poetry, Writing for Young Adults, Unpublished Manuscript, Indigenous Writing, and the overall Prize for Literature, which is the single richest prize for writing in Australia. This year's winners were:

Fiction:

To Name Those Lost
by Rohan Wilson (Allen & Unwin)

Non-Fiction:

*The Europeans in Australia:
Volume Three: Nation*
by Alan Atkinson (NewSouth)

Drama:

Resplendence
by Angus Cerini (Angus Cerini/Doubletap)

Poetry:

The Beautiful Anxiety
by Jill Jones (Puncher & Wattmann)

Young Adult:

The Protected
by Claire Zorn (UQP)

Unpublished Manuscript:

The Dry
by Jane Harper

The Victorian Prize for Literature:

*The Europeans in Australia:
Volume Three: Nation*
by Alan Atkinson (NewSouth)

People's Choice:

Where Song Began
by Tim Low (Penguin)

Principles:





RESIDENCIES AND FELLOWSHIPS

Hot Desk Fellowships

In 2015 the popular Hot Desk Fellowships, once again made possible by the generous support of the Readings Foundation, gave 20 writers the chance to focus on their writing for ten weeks within the creative hub of the Wheeler Centre.

The 2015 fellows were:

Cameron Baker, Alice Bishop, Susan Bradley Smith, Kelly Chandler, Toby Fehily, Suzy Freeman-Greene, Tully Hansen, Rebecca Butterworth, Li-Kim Chuah, Emilie Collyer, Emma Marie Jones, Lian Low, Aicha Marhfour, Izzy Roberts-Orr, Clem Bastow, Astrid Edwards, Georgia Symons, Sam van Zweden, Yvette Walker, and Jessica Yu.

In partnership with the Readings Foundation.

Principles:



The Literary Collection

MGallery by Sofitel is a collection of boutique hotels each of which are inspired by their own stories. In 2015, the Wheeler Centre partnered with the MGallery by Sofitel to provide Australian writers with creative retreats to focus on their work, away from the distractions and demands of everyday life. Inspired by their stay, each writer was commissioned to produce a creative piece inspired by their stay. These stories will be published and placed in each hotel room across all the MGallery by Sofitel Hotels in 2016.

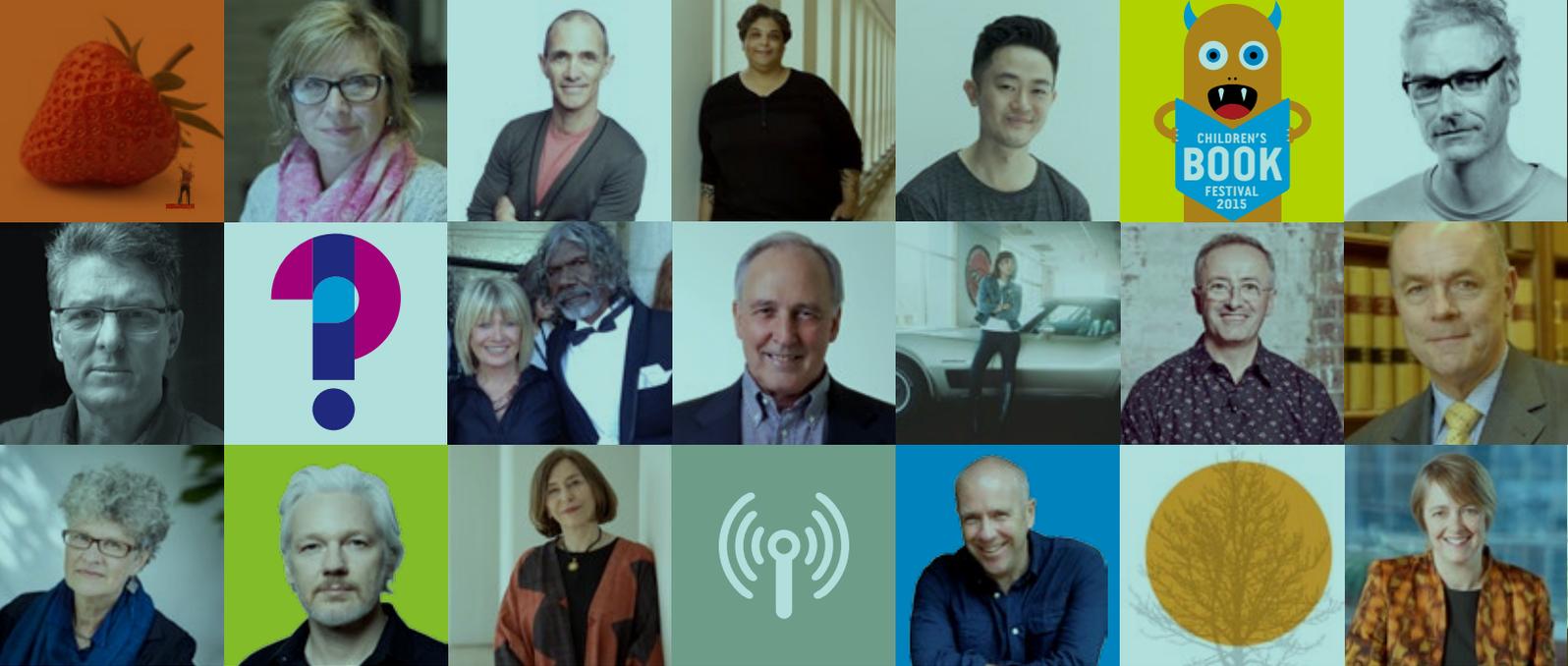
“At the Wheeler Centre, we’ve long known that there’s no better way to luxuriate than with a good story. But finding the perfect surroundings for inspiration – for writer or reader alike – is just as important. When a partnership was suggested to develop the Literary Collection where each MGallery by Sofitel hotel could support and provide a place of escape, reflection and indulgence for some of Australia’s finest writers we couldn’t resist. These stories are like the hotels in which they were written: boutique, individual and captivating.” Michael Williams, director, the Wheeler Centre

Alison Croggon, Chris Flynn, Debra Oswald, Favel Parrett, Graeme Simsion, Hannie Rayson, Toni Jordan and Robyn Annear participated in the 2015 Literary Collection.

Presented in partnership with MGallery by Sofitel.

Principles:



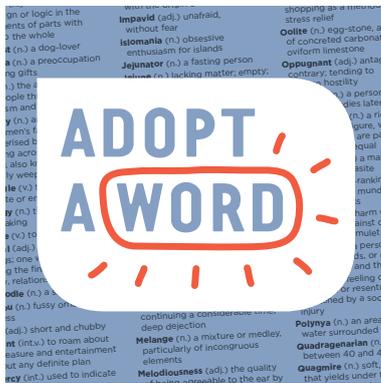


Future-proofing our approach

Over the last three years, with the support of the board, the Wheeler Centre has invested in a comprehensive strategic review and restructure of our development activities, with a focus on creating sustainable revenue models and meaningful diversification in our income streams.

This support has seen the inclusion of dedicated resourcing to drive targeted philanthropic and private support, strategic partnerships as well as corporate partnerships focused on providing consultancy and bespoke programming services which in turn support our principles and goals.

Key new initiatives and existing initiatives in 2015 included:



ADOPT A WORD

Do you despair that doublespeak, political gobbledegook and corporate gibberish rule the world?

Are you concerned about the degradation of public language? Would you like a way to show your love and support for the Wheeler Centre, but just can't find the right words?

In August 2015, the Wheeler Centre established the perfect scheme to address these concerns, with the launch of our fundraising campaign to help preserve, protect and nurture the building blocks of our books, writing and ideas. For an \$85 donation, individuals could adopt a word and protect it from the ravages of modern life.

In its first year, more than 140 words were adopted.



MINISTRY OF IDEAS

The Ministry of Ideas, our consultancy and bespoke programming service for corporate partnerships, continued to evolve with existing partners continuing and new partners joining.

In 2015, we brought a new lunchtime series to staff of our founding corporate partner, Minter Ellison. Over six lunchtimes *Expert at Everything* nurtured the curiosity of Minter Ellison professionals with topics such as the mystery and science of gin, how to retrain your brain, and how to be an astronaut.

Two new partners joined our corporate partnership programme: Hall & Wilcox and Aesop. Hall & Wilcox commenced their *Tomorrow's Conversation Today* series of client dinners, and Aesop launched our partnership with *The Wheeler Centre Conversation Series*, that are held each month at their head office.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

There is nothing hollow about conversation. Across the year, our Conversation Starters invest in conversations that the Wheeler Centre believes define our community: topics that we are passionate about, topics that frighten and excite us. From poets, journalists, novelists and wordsmiths who inspire us to experts in sciences, politics and philosophical thinking from whom we don't often hear – we aim to present conversation worth of our community.

Our major donors – our Conversation Starters – annually contribute to the conversations that take place at the Wheeler Centre. All events supported by our Conversation Starters are free for all to enjoy, are recorded for digital publishing and ensure that our writers and thought leaders are paid.



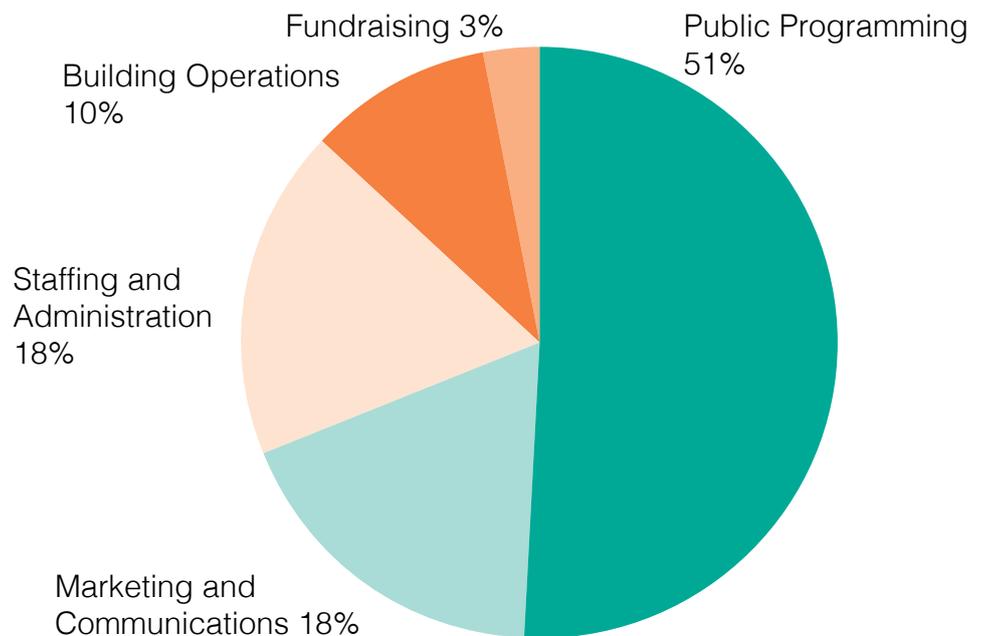
Financial performance

The Wheeler Centre is a key organisation in the medium-sized cultural sector, with an annual turnover of \$3.2–4.0M. The Wheeler Centre values fiscal accountability, with a focus on generating new revenue streams and managing our cost base responsibly. The Board and its finance sub-committee monitor performance against budget for all activities and oversee the long-term security of the company. The following breakdown provides a snapshot of our 2015 financial operations. It is not intended to replace or modify the content of the centre's independently audited Annual Financial Statements.

EXPENDITURE

The Centre's annual expenditure patterns in 2015 demonstrate the high levels of resourcing required to support our mission:

- 1. Public Programming:** Artists' fees and production and travel costs account for 51% of expenditure.
- 2. Staffing and Administration:** Our daily programming and service delivery model is necessarily resource intensive and makes up for 18% of expenditure.
- 3. Fundraising:** Various fundraising activities account for 3% of expenditure.
- 4. Building Operations:** the operating of a physical hub in the dedicated wing of State Library Victoria accounts for 10% of expenditure.





INCOME

The public appetite for our daily talks and special events has only increased. Likewise, the support we provide to the sector has become invaluable to partners, publishers, booksellers, writers and literary organisations. The Centre is focused on securing income levels that enhance our ability to deliver on this demand.

We have six main revenue streams:

1. Box Office and Project Fees:

The Centre has consistently achieved ambitious box office targets and increased this income stream by 32%. Box office and project fees account for 18% in 2015.

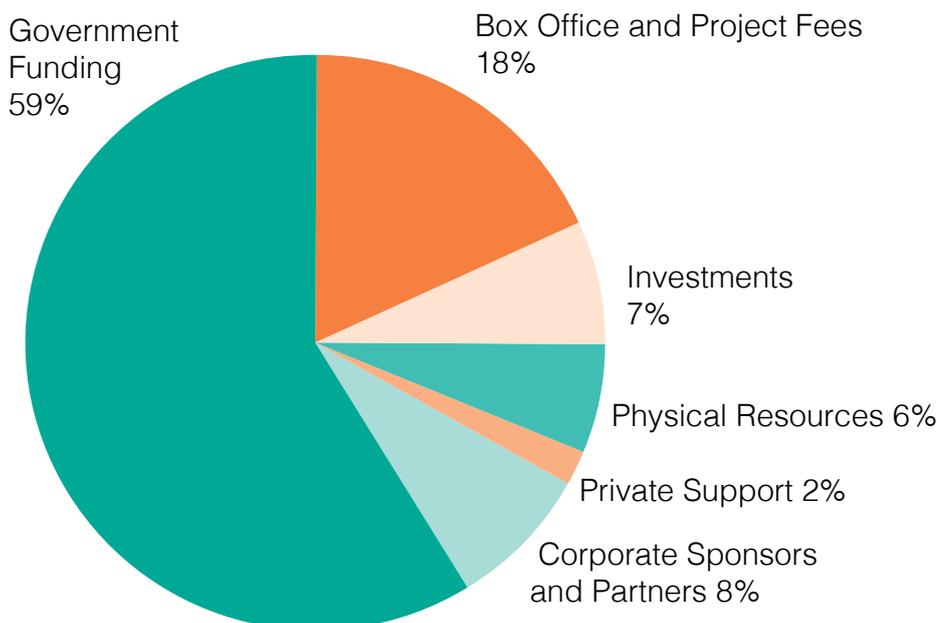
2. Investments: The Centre has a strong net asset position, underpinned by our Endowment from the Planet Wheeler Foundation. Our annual income from the Endowment includes interest and dividends from an investment portfolio that is managed by an independent wealth manager and overseen by our Board. In 2015, this accounted for 7% of annual turnover.

3. Physical Resources: A steady income stream comes from rental rates and venue hire accounting for 6% of overall income for the Centre.

4. Private Support: 2% of the Centre's income comes from major Donors, Trusts and Foundations and fundraising campaigns.

5. Corporate Sponsors and Partners: Overall levels of private support have remained steady at approximately 8% of turnover annually. The Centre is pursuing greater diversification within this income stream, with a reduced reliance on trusts and foundations and increased focus on corporate sponsorship and donor programmes.

6. Government Funding: The Centre receives support for our activities from federal, state and local government through the arts and culture portfolios, accounting for 59% of income.





Partnerships

VENUES, PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSHOPS

The Wheeler Centre is proud to partner with a number of local and regional venues across our yearly programme of events. Our ongoing collaboration with Australia's diverse publishing industry and support of local bookshops demonstrates our commitment to bring writers and ideas to our audience.

CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS

Energetic and imaginative collaborations with community and cultural partners enable us to enhance our offerings to the community. Working with partner organisations also allows us to engage more broadly with diverse audiences.

RESIDENT ORGANISATIONS

Melbourne's designation as a UNESCO City of Literature recognises the invaluable contribution made by the following organisations, all of which reside in the Wheeler Centre:



THE CITY OF LITERATURE

Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne Council – joined the existing resident organisations in the building. The office is responsible for celebrating and promoting Melbourne's UNESCO designation and everything literary Melbourne has to offer.

Alongside these organisations, a range of volunteer-led entities work within the Wheeler Centre, through small-scale Hot Desk residencies: The Stella Prize, PEN Melbourne and Freeplay Independent Games Festival. Small, volunteer-run organisations are a vital component of the ecology of our literary and publishing sector. The Wheeler Centre is proud to support their activities and operations.





Thank you

As a cultural institution, we rely on the vision and generosity of our partners and supporters. Their contribution and commitment enables us to champion writers and writing, support the literary sector, elevate public conversation and produce an extraordinary year-long programme. We take this opportunity to say thank you.

GOVERNMENT



PATRONS

Tony and Maureen Wheeler

MAJOR SPONSORS



THE INTERROBANG PRESENTING PARTNERS



MINISTRY OF IDEAS



TRUSTS AND FOUNDATIONS



DONORS

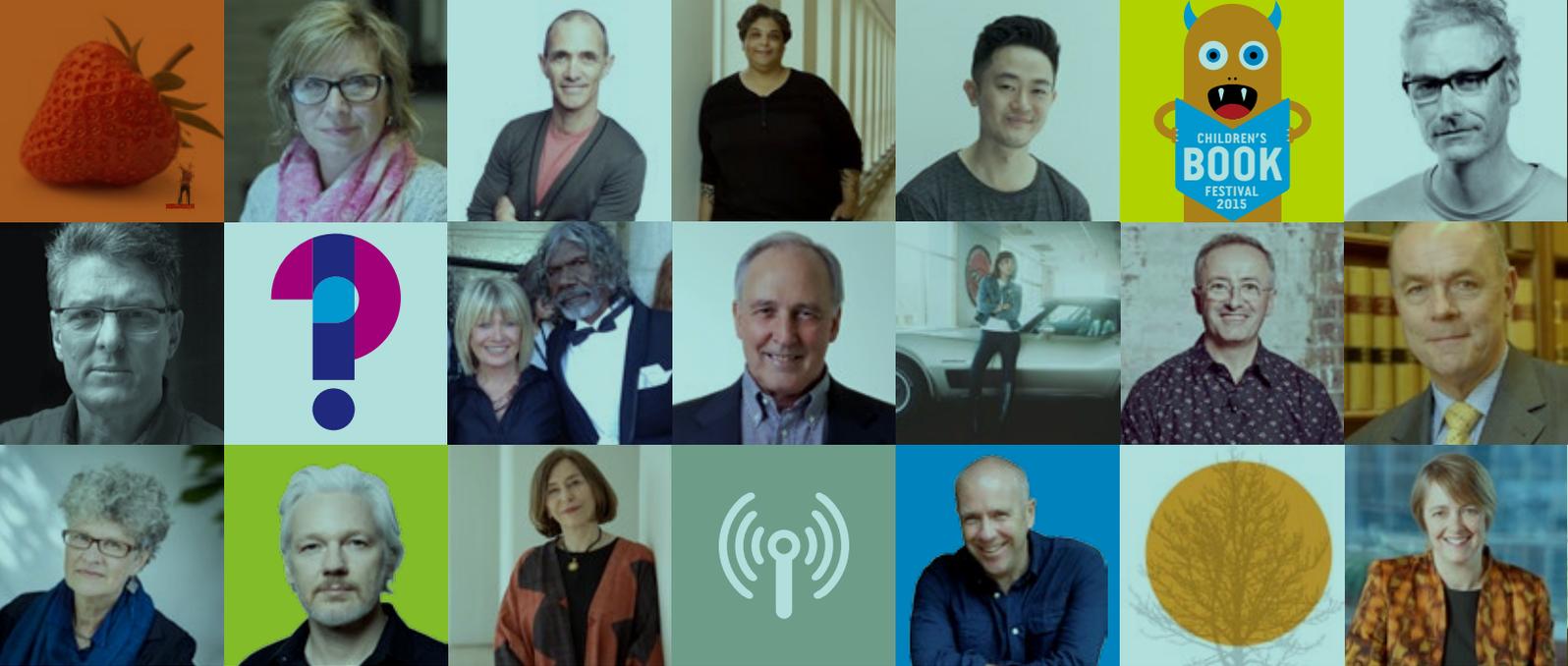
Current Conversation Starters

- Wendy and Rod Brooks (2015)
- Wendy and Tony Hudson (2014, 2015)
- George and Rosa Morstyn (2013, 2014, 2015)
- Michael and Radhika Santhanam-Martin (2015)
- Wendy Whelan (2014, 2015)
- Brigitte Smith (2014, 2015)

Inaugural Conversation Starters

- Eric and Sue Beecher
- Peter Biggs
- Julian Burnside
- Robin and Marylou Friday
- Andy and Jill Griffiths
- Alex and Stephanie Miller
- Mr Russell Mills (deceased)
- Patricia O'Donnell
- Mark Rubbo
- Di and Andrew Rule
- Craig Semple
- Janet Whiting

Thank you also for the generosity and support of the 216 Friends of the Wheeler Centre donors who contributed to our tax appeal and those friends who adopted a word or became a regular giver.



Our people

OUR BOARD



Eric Beecher –
Chairman



Tony Hudson –
Company
Secretary



Joanna
Murray-Smith



Mark Rubbo



Gabrielle Coyne



Di Rule



Anita Ziemer



OUR STAFF

Director:

Michael Williams

General Manager:

Jaclyn Booton

Head of Programming:

Emily Sexton

Head of Marketing and Communications:

Pauline O'Brien (to May);
Emily Harms (from September)

Head of Sponsorship and Development:

Kendra Overall

Executive Assistant:

Katherine Lynch (to June);

Office Manager:

Lyndal Peake (from October)

Programming Manager:

Helen Withycombe

Series Producer:

Gemma Rayner

Project Coordinator:

Lucy de Kretser (to April)

Project Producer:

Amita Kirpalani (from February);
Sarah Greentree (from March)

Digital Manager:

Jon Tjhia

Digital Writer/Editor:

Jo Case (to January);
Sophie Quick (from May)

Digital Content Producer:

Connor Tomas O'Brien (from April)

Marketing Manager:

Shannon Hick

Marketing Assistant:

Ben Packer (to February)

Ticketing and CRM Coordinator:

Claire Flynn (from March)

Publicist:

Tamara Zimet (to October);
Kate Blackwood (from November)

Events Manager:

Sebastian Prowse (to October);
Gabrielle Ryan (from October)

Technical Coordinator:

Oren Gerassi

Accounts:

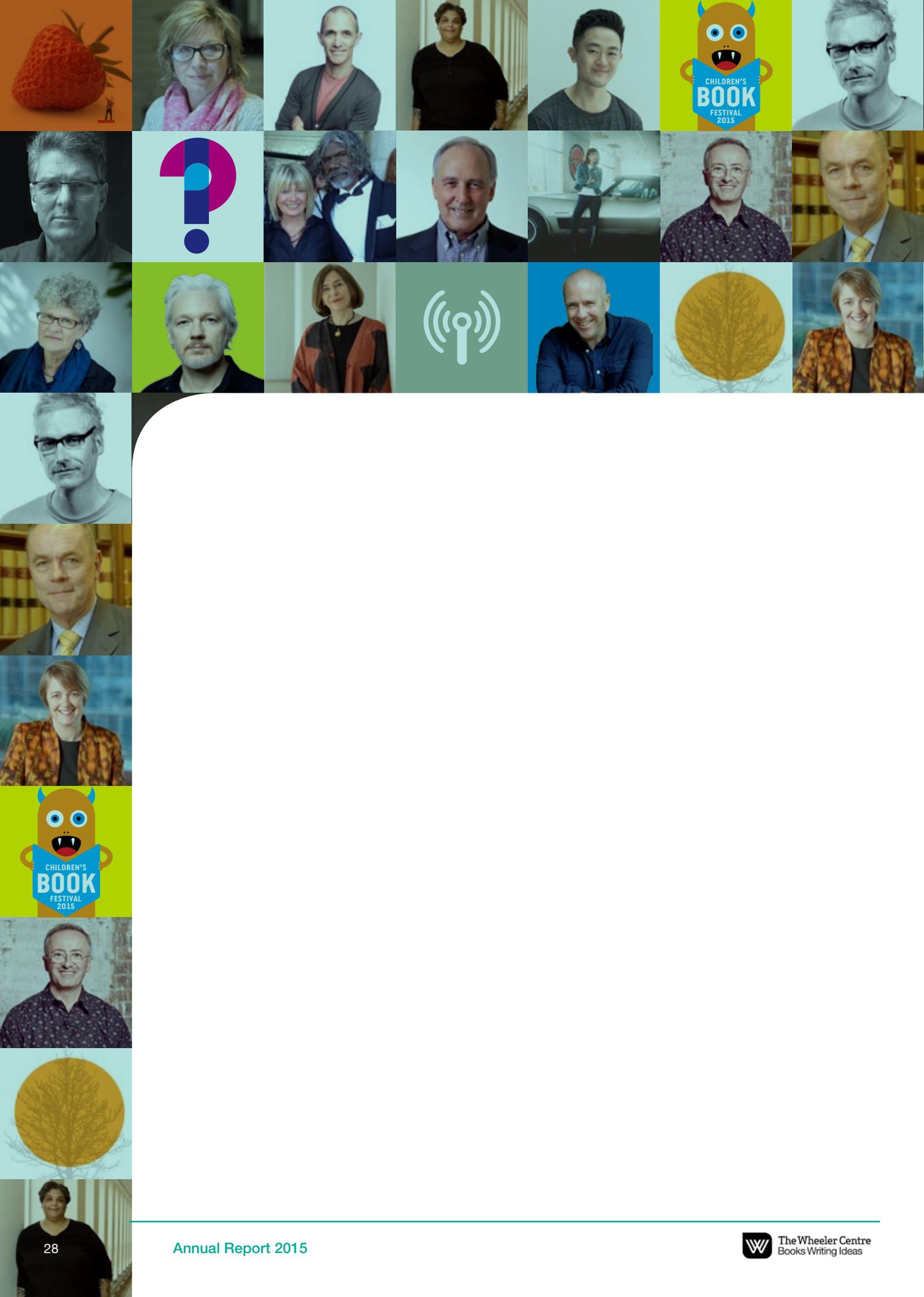
Sam Ryan

Receptionists:

Ania Anderst (to October),
Fiona Williams (to July),
Leticia Parish (from September), and
Fury Telford (from October)

Our extraordinary front and back-of-house team who ensure our events run seamlessly night after night:

Ania Anderst
Colin Atkinson
Flavia Baird-Watson
Anne Bravos
Chris Cody
Aurora Conway
Jeff Cregan
David Gros
Jase Hannon
Jessica Hutchison
Shamini Joseph
Kylie King
Emily Laidlaw
Kylie Maslen
Rose McCormick
Sally McPhee
Kevin O'Faircheallaigh
Leticia Parish
Owen Phillips
Ritchie Plunkett
Sophia Robinson
Autumn Royal
Gabrielle Ryan
Priscilla Schmacker-Beck
Krystyn Smale
Jen Squire
Steven Stewart
Georgina Titheridge
Nikita Vanderbyl
Fraser Walker
Tessa Wallis
Andrew Walmsley
Julia Weston
Timothy White







176 Little Lonsdale Street
 Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
 T +61 3 9094 7800
 F +61 3 9650 6473

Trading as Centre for
 Books, Writing and Ideas

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