



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

176 Little Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
+61 3 9094 7809

CORY DOCTOROW, TIM ROGERS, WALEED ALY, MINDY SEU, GEETANJALI SHREE, ALAN JOYCE, MYF WARHURST HEADLINE THE WHEELER CENTRE'S LATEST PROGRAM DROP

Thursday 18 June



The Wheeler Centre today announces a blockbuster new slate of events interrogating the forces reshaping our world, from the decay of the digital landscape to the fracturing of shared morality, the perverse origins of the internet and the rise of artificial intelligence as a cultural force. A series of unmissable events presented in partnership with Now or Never – featuring tech critic Cory Doctorow, internet historian Mindy Seu, author and musician Anna Goldsworthy, and a landmark conversation on the future of music criticism – anchor a program that also spans intimate storytelling, political journalism, poetry and the enduring power of the written word.

QUOTE ATTRIBUTABLE TO ERIN VINCENT, THE WHEELER CENTRE CEO: 'We're thrilled to welcome this extraordinary line-up of local and international voices. These new events bring together some of the most incisive thinkers and cultural commentators working today to help us make sense of the world in a time of rapid transformation.'

She continues, 'From the profound impact of artificial intelligence and the changing architecture of the internet to questions of ethics, creativity, politics and public discourse, these events invite audiences to engage deeply with the ideas shaping our collective future.'

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As algorithms replace gatekeepers and traditional publications continue to contract, who decides what music matters – and what is lost when writing that interrogates, contextualises and challenges begins to fade from view? Broadcaster **Sosephina Fuamoli**, music and pop culture reporter **Al Newstead** and writer and critic **Sarah Smith** sit down with moderator **Simon Winkler** for a conversation about the past, present and future of music criticism, and what it means to write about music in an era shaped by platforms, endless opinion and the collapse of cultural authority.

Tech critic and author **Cory Doctorow** makes the case that the degrading online experience isn't a glitch; it's by design. Speaking with **Lisa M. Given**, Doctorow unpacks 'enshittification', the term he coined to describe how platforms like Facebook, Amazon and X follow a predictable trajectory: drawing users in with convenience and connection, inviting advertisers into the system, then stripping back the experience in pursuit of profit – mapping the collapse of the utopian early internet promise, and what it might still take to reclaim a more open digital future.

In the cathedral-like Reading Room at State Library Victoria, artist and internet historian **Mindy Seu** stages ***A Sexual History of the Internet***: a participatory lecture performance tracing the pervasive and perverse origins of our digital tools through a charged entanglement of desire and design, pleasure and control. The audience becomes the voice: citations read aloud through a shared script on mobile devices, a collective act of speaking and re-citation that transforms the space into something intimate and electric, a chorus of internet intimacy made physical.

In this special edition of **Melbourne Conversations**, author and musician **Anna Goldsworthy** discusses her new ***Quarterly Essay, The God We Made*** – an examination of how artificial intelligence is reshaping culture in its own image, and why AI may be our most persuasive God yet. Hosted by **Antonia Pont**, the conversation is accompanied by a musical performance from Goldsworthy composed as a direct artistic response to the essay's ideas, bringing theory into dialogue with human creativity at the very moment it feels most under threat.

International Booker Prize-winning author **Geetanjali Shree** – whose 2022 novel *Tomb of Sand* made literary history as the first Hindi-language work to win the prize – meets **Mridula Nath Chakraborty** for a conversation spanning her luminous, genre-defying career, from the evocative *Our City That Year* to the formally inventive *Once Elephants Lived Here*. Together they explore the ascendancy of South Asian literature, the life-changing impact of that historic win, and the power of polyphonic, big-hearted storytelling to resonate far beyond its origins.

Veteran journalist, broadcaster and academic **Waleed Aly** discusses his agenda-setting new ***Quarterly Essay, On Speech, Equality and Politics*** with host **Sally Warhaft**, tracking the forces that have brought

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liberalism to its breaking point, from political polarisation and the limits of free speech to the rise of illiberal democracy and the new battles of identity.

Beloved radio announcer and media personality **Myf Warhurst** and **Jess McGuire** dive in for a funny, frank and deeply relatable conversation about *Middle Rage* – part confession, part manifesto and a clarion call for anyone who has hit that particular stage of life where optimism alone is no longer enough. Together they navigate the shocks of ageing, shifting identity and the quiet fury that comes from half a century of dealing with other people's bullsh*t, and explore how middle rage can be transformed into something not only productive and purposeful, but joyful, irreverent and brimming with hard-won wisdom.

The Wheeler Centre's new **Writers in RESIDENCE** series launches with legendary political journalist **George Megalogenis** in conversation with **Glyn Davis** over a refined two-course dinner at RESIDENCE at the Potter. Discussing his new book *Three Shocks*, Megalogenis lays out the three major societal shifts reshaping Australia's political landscape, illuminating which parties are keeping up with the times and which are being left behind, as demographic, economic and social forces redefine the nation's politics for the 21st century.

In this year's **E. W. Cole Lecture**, award-winning author **Alice Pung** celebrates the 20th anniversary of her beloved debut *Unpolished Gem* with a talk on the fundamentals of writing and what it takes to keep showing up to the blank page. Drawing on two decades and 15 books across fiction, YA, children's literature and non-fiction, Pung examines the quiet power of creativity in the face of crisis, political upheaval and changing tastes and why writing and reading remain among our most essential tools for making sense of the world.

Against the sweeping views of the Mornington Peninsula and accompanied by a delicious meal from the estate's hatted restaurant The Wheeler Centre's series **Books and Ideas at Port Phillip Estate** launches with acclaimed author and broadcaster **Stan Grant**. Joining host **Jason Steger**, Grant explores his expansive new book *When Words Fail Us*, drawing on thinkers and artists from Plato and Simone Weil to Cormac McCarthy and Radiohead to make a compelling case for silence in an age of noise and to examine how words can fail to meet the moment in the context of Australia's history, identity and political division.

One of Australia's most influential and scrutinised business leaders, **Alan Joyce** reflects on his tenure as Qantas CEO with **Raf Epstein** – guiding the airline through the Global Financial Crisis, bitter industrial disputes and the unprecedented disruption of COVID-19 in a career that has never been far from the headlines. In this rare and candid conversation, Joyce also revisits his role as one of Australia's most



prominent corporate advocates for marriage equality, offering his own perspective on the defining moments, the controversies and the lessons learned along the way.

In the latest edition of **Bookish Club**, Australian musician, actor and writer **Tim Rogers** turns his attention to *Waiting for Godot* – one of the world's most referenced and least actually-read works of modern drama. With host **Jess McGuire**, Rogers unpacks the play's black humour, bracing nihilism and utter absurdity, exploring how Beckett's tragicomic meditation on existence, meaning and the fleetingness of time resonates in his own experience of life. Drinks, nibbles and audience discussion included; and all panellists are guaranteed to show up.

The **Emerging Writers' Festival** celebrates its 23rd iteration with the official launch of its 2026 program – a lineup bursting with cross-disciplinary projects, bold creative energy and the kind of literary community that has made EWF a fixture on the Australian cultural calendar. New work from **Chloe Mayne**, **Ella Rowe**, **Lucy Fan Xu** and Festival Guest Curator **moirra** sets the tone for what promises to be another unmissable year.

Renowned poet **Maxine Beneba Clarke** and musician **Amaya Laucirica** bring their celebrated collaboration *Fire Moves Faster* to Geelong, weaving poems from Clarke's acclaimed collection *How Decent Folk Behave* with Laucirica's original compositions into an arresting union of poetry and song that moves through trauma and joy, confusion and clarity, despair and hope. The evening will be followed by a Q&A exploring their creative partnership and the role of art in navigating uncertain times.

The first cohort of The Wheeler Centre's **2026 Hot Desk Fellows** make their **The Next Big Thing** debuts, sharing exclusive excerpts from works-in-progress that span poetry, historical fiction and futurist drama. Host **Pranati Narayan Visweswaran** introduces **Amarantha**, **Kanika Chopra**, **Karen Gardner**, **Lise Leitner**, **Ernest Price**, **Tayla Richardson** and **Saraid Taylor** to The Moat for an evening of captivating readings and a rare glimpse into their creative practice.

The following month, a special Poetry Month edition of **The Next Big Thing** sees six emerging poets gather in the intimate surrounds of The Moat to share new and recently published work that traverses the full range of human experience – colonial legacy and cultural resilience, identity and migration, the textures of modern life and the quiet work of recovery. Wiradjuri poet **Alison J Barton** (*Not Telling*), **Sholto Buck** (*In the Printed Version of Heaven*), visual artist and writer **Linda Judge**, **Laurence Levy-Atkinson** (*Too Much Night*), Connor Weightman (*Fivehundred Swimming Pools*) and **Wing Yau** (*The Fiction of Flying*) are each poised to make their mark – and this is a rare chance to hear them before they do.



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Hosted by **Xanthea O'Connor, Shut Up and Write!** at The Wheeler Centre offers writers of all kinds – novelists, poets, academics, journalists and anyone keen to get words on the page – a welcoming space to set aside distractions and dedicate protected time to their work, without critique, comparison or pressure to share, just the quiet motivation that comes from writing alongside others.

– ENDS –

Media contact

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Media centre: Images available [here](#)

The full list of events and dates are listed below. For more information, please visit wheelercentre.com/events

Stan Grant at Port Phillip Estate

Stan Grant, Jason Steger
6.30pm, Friday 17 July
Port Phillip Estate
Presented in partnership with Port Phillip Estate

The Next Big Thing: Hot Desk 2026 Edition #1

Amarantha, Kanika Chopra, Karen Gardner, Lise Leitner, Ernest Price, Tayla Richardson, Saraid Taylor
6.30pm, Monday 20 July
The Moat

The Next Big Thing: Poetry Month Edition

Alison J Barton, Sholto Buck, Linda Judge, Laurence Levy-Atkinson, Connor Weightman. Wing Yau
6.30pm, Monday 3 August
The Moat
Presented in partnership with Red Room Poetry as part of Poetry Month

Alan Joyce in Conversation

Alan Joyce, Raf Epstein
6.30pm, Tuesday 4 August
The Wheeler Centre

Emerging Writers' Festival: Program Launch 2026

Jess Zanoni, Bianca Lucchesi, Parth Rahatekar, moirra., Chloe Mayne, Lucy Fan Xu, Ella Rowe

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6.30pm, Wednesday 5 August

The Wheeler Centre

Presented in partnership with Emerging Writers' Festival

The 2026 E.W. Cole Lecture: Alice Pung on Keeping Calm and Carrying On

Alice Pung

6.30pm, Thursday 6 August

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Geetanjali Shree in Conversation

Geetanjali Shree, Mridula Nath Chakraborty

6.30pm, Wednesday 12 August

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Fire Moves Faster: What a City Can Overcome [Geelong]

Maxine Beneba Clarke, Amaya Laucirica

5.30pm, Wednesday 12 August

Geelong Library and Heritage Centre

Presented in partnership with Geelong Regional Libraries and supported by Red Room Poetry as part of Poetry Month

Wrapped or Warped? The State of Music Criticism

Sosephina Fuamoli, Al Newstead, Sarah Smith, Simon Winkler

6.30pm, Wednesday 19 August

The Wheeler Centre

Presented in partnership with Now or Never

Cory Doctorow: Enshittification

Cory Doctorow, Lisa M. Given

7.00pm, Tuesday 25 August

The Capitol

Presented in partnership with Now or Never and RMIT University

A SEXUAL HISTORY OF THE INTERNET

Mindy Seu

8.00pm, Tuesday 25 August

Reading Room at State Library Victoria

Presented in partnership with Now or Never and State Library of Victoria

Melbourne Conversations: The God We Made

Anna Goldsworthy, Antonia Pont

7.00pm, Thursday 27 August

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The Edge, Fed Square

Presented in partnership with Now or Never and Fed Square

Shut Up and Write! [August]

10.00am, Saturday 29 August

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Bookish Club with Tim Rogers

Tim Rogers

2.30pm, Saturday 29 August

The Moat

Myf Warhurst: Middle Rage

Myf Warhurst, Jess McGuire

6.30pm, Tuesday 1 September

The Wheeler Centre

Writers in RESIDENCE: George Megalogenis

George Megalogenis, Glyn Davis

6.30pm, Tuesday 8 September

RESIDENCE at the Potter

Presented in partnership with RESIDENCE at the Potter and University of Melbourne Arts and Culture

The Fifth Estate – Waleed Aly: On Speech, Equality and Politics

Waleed Aly, Sally Warhaft

6.30pm, Thursday 10 September

The Wheeler Centre

Shut Up and Write! [September]

10.00am, Saturday 26 September

The Wheeler Centre

The Wheeler Centre is Melbourne's home for smart, passionate and entertaining public talks, and exists to support writers, readers and thinkers. Through live and digital conversations, debates, readings, performances and discussions, it deepens public engagement with the most pressing topics of the day. It is dedicated to creative collaboration, community engagement, diversity, and innovation.

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