



# Annual Report 2021



The Wheeler Centre  
Books Writing Ideas

**The Wheeler Centre acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work. We pay our respects to the people of the Kulin Nation on whose lands this report was created and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past and present.**

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## Message from our CEO Caro Llewellyn



As we look back at the year that was, the highs, the lows, lockdowns, riots and an earthquake, it's hard to imagine anything else could have been thrown at us in 2021.

Although we shouldered our fair share of challenges, the resilience of the Wheeler Centre team was inspiring and we made it through with good grace. As the saying goes, the show must go on, and like true professionals, no matter the stresses and strains behind the scenes, our staff, partners and stakeholders ensured the show did go on. We programmed 371 speakers across the year, keeping the conversations, stories and ideas flowing across 108 events, three quarters of which were free or low cost.

Like many other arts organisations whose public-facing events and associated revenue streams fell victim to the pandemic, we were compelled to look at new ways to generate income and ensure we remained viable. To that end, we strengthened and enriched our digital offerings. In total, 50% of our events were digital or live-streamed, with personal highlights including Pah!, an event presented in partnership with Melbourne Fringe that brought together emerging and established d/Deaf storytellers, and a new series, Postcards From Abroad, which invited internationally renowned writers directly into our audience members' homes.

Postcards kicked off with Jonathan Franzen discussing his extraordinary novel *Crossroads* from his kitchen in California. As part of our commitment to ensuring our events are accessible to regional audiences, we teamed up with the Byron and Newcastle Writers' Festivals, whose events were impacted by COVID-19, to share this very special conversation. Further Postcards editions included David Sedaris, Fran Lebowitz, Rabih Alameddine and Paul Auster, whose interview was taking place when the Melbourne earthquake struck in September. Despite the earth shaking, host Corrie Perkin didn't skip a beat. Auster couldn't believe it when told there'd been a magnitude 5.9 earthquake. Like I said, the show goes on.

We continued strengthening our commitment to the next generation of storytellers with 20 teen, education or youth-specific events. The 2021 Teen Gala provided an inspiring moment as teens read and performed their works on stage in a dazzling display of resilience.

Throughout the challenges of 2021, it was moments like this, sitting in the audience, witnessing the beauty of language and connecting with other readers and writers, that I was reminded just how privileged I am to work with my dedicated colleagues and do the work we do.

An enormous thank you to our fearless Chair, Susan Oliver AM, who will retire in early 2022 after four years at the helm. Susan has been tireless in her support for the Wheeler Centre, and I'm incredibly grateful to her for every shoulder-to-the-wheel moment we shared in 2021. Susan and I were ably supported by our Board of Directors who stood by us throughout the challenges of COVID-19. Not only did we keep the Wheeler Centre on a straight course but we discovered opportunities to enrich our offerings along the way, and I'm incredibly proud of all we've achieved this year.

The Wheeler Centre was fortunate to receive strong support from both the Victorian and Australian Governments and we were thrilled to be a recipient of the Australian Government's COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund, which supported our recovery from the effects of COVID-19. I'd also like to acknowledge the hard work of our colleagues at Creative Victoria, City of Melbourne and the Premier's office for their unstinting commitment to the Australian cultural community.

This vital financial backing, coupled with the unfailing support of our friends, donors and audiences, ensured our success in another trying but ultimately fulfilling year. It is these groups of supporters that enable the Wheeler Centre to facilitate the engaging and transformative conversations that connect our society and make it stronger. We are indebted to you all.

**Caro Llewellyn** CEO

## Message from our Chair Susan Oliver AM



In 2021, I was reminded once more of the strength of the Wheeler Centre as we faced yet another difficult year of the pandemic. We were agile in our move to digital formats, an agility tested by the changing rules of lockdown, which limited physical

attendance at events. The support of City of Melbourne, the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and the Australian Government through special support to the creative sector, kept our organisation funded to continue to do what we do best – bring creative thinkers and their ideas to diverse audiences and enable discussion and debate.

Highlights of 2021 were the Postcards From Abroad series that helped shrink borders in a time of being apart, the continuation of our popular Broadly Speaking series, which explores issues through a feminist lens, and a new series partnership with the State Library of Victoria, The Salon Series, which launched with a powerful event during NAIDOC Week that amplified First Nations voices including Professor Larissa Behrendt, Daniel James and Susie Anderson.

We are thankful for the continued support of our generous corporate sponsors and donors, and were particularly excited to commence a website redevelopment project, made possible by the support of the Aesop Foundation 2020 Support Fund.

Next year I will retire as Chair of the Wheeler Centre after four years at the helm. It has been a challenging and fulfilling role during a particularly tough time but I have enjoyed support from a very strong board and know we have the governance and accountability in place that our funding partners and our audiences expect. I am pleased to see CEO Caro Llewellyn build her team and to observe their commitment to furthering the discussion of books, writing and ideas.

It is a privilege to further strengthen the relevance of the Wheeler Centre and deliver programming that inspires curiosity, connection and engagement in a challenging world where we're all searching for explanations and meaning.

**Susan Oliver AM FAICD** Chair

## Message from our Patron Tony Wheeler AO



2021 was a challenging year and, like all arts organisations, the Wheeler Centre was hit hard by the pandemic and ongoing lockdowns.

Yet the Centre soldiered on and managed to keep the conversation going at a time that Victorians, and audiences beyond the border, most needed to connect.

The Wheeler Centre's commitment to innovation and ingenuity continued in 2021 with digital events and a breadth of online content including podcasts, blogs and videos keeping audiences engaged with books, writing and ideas.

It was also heartening to see the Wheeler Centre's industry programs, including writing incubator The Next Chapter, podcast mentoring scheme Signal Boost and the long-running Hot Desk Fellowships for emerging writers, continue during a time when creatives needed our support more than ever.

**Tony Wheeler AO** Patron

# 2021 at a Glance



# 108

Total events



# 54

Live events



# 20

Wheeler Education and youth events



# 54

Digital events



# 11

Regional events



# 79%

Free or Name Your Price events



# 74

Events delivered in partnership with other organisations



# 371

Total speakers

# 15%

First Nations speakers



# 33%

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse speakers



# 17%

LGBTQIA+ speakers



# 112

Emerging writers supported



**921,336** views on YouTube representing a watch time of **230,572** hours.

# General Programming Highlights



Bruce Pascoe at the Wheeler Centre's Di Gribble event at Malthouse Outdoor Stage.



Jonathan Franzen streamed in for our inaugural Postcards From Abroad event.

In 2021, the Wheeler Centre hosted 108 events, and employed 371 writers and artists. We engaged 38,675 audience members through a combination of live, digital and hybrid events that spanned a diverse range of styles including panels, conversations, readings and performance.

The Wheeler Centre worked creatively throughout the year in partnership with a broad range of new and existing partners. More than two-thirds of the Centre's programme was delivered in partnership with other cultural organisations, festivals and community partners. In November, we partnered with Spread the Word, London's writer development agency, and the Melbourne City of Literature Office to present *The Stories We Tell Ourselves*, a special initiative as part of the UK/Australia Season.

We continued to prioritise the importance of creating space for First Nations stories and storytelling. In March, thanks to generous support from Creative Partnerships Australia matched by individual donations, we delivered the Di Gribble Argument exploring First Nations responses to climate change. Nearly 500 audience members gathered at Malthouse Outdoor Stage to hear talks responding to three essays by First Nations writers Bruce Pascoe (author of *Dark Emu*), Victor Steffensen (author of *Fire Country*) and Teila Watson (aka Ancestress), offering three different generational perspectives on climate management and caring for Country.

In August, in response to continued lockdowns and border closures, we launched *Postcards From Abroad*, a new digital conversation series bringing the best and brightest international literary talent to Australian audiences. This series saw international literary luminaries such as Siri Hustvedt, David Sedaris, Fran Lebowitz, Jonathan Franzen and Ruth Ozeki appear in discussion with high-profile local hosts such as Sami Shah, Sarah Krasnostein and Rachael Brown.

We collaborated with Melbourne City Reads to bring readers together and support our incredible literary culture, promoting readership and sales of books by local authors. In monthly events from August to November, authors appeared at the Wheeler Centre (in live, digital and podcast conversations) to discuss their new books. The initiative was supported by the City of Melbourne, the Victorian Government and ABC Radio Melbourne.

We delivered exciting COVID-safe programming at a range of outdoor venues across Melbourne, including Malthouse Outdoor Stage, MPavilion, Royal Botanic Gardens and Sidney Myer Music Bowl. While many live events were scheduled for the year, snap lockdowns and the extended June-October lockdown in Melbourne resulted in many shifting to digital formats. Approximately three-quarters of the Wheeler Centre's programmed events in 2021 were free or Name Your Price. For ticketed events, an uncapped number of free tickets were available for First Nations attendees.

The Wheeler Centre is committed to delivering all live events in fully accessible venues for both artists on stage and audience members. Our 2021 digital offerings created opportunities for engagement from audience members who were otherwise unable to access our events due to geographical, financial and health challenges, or other limitations. We look forward to continuing to offer digitally accessible events into the future.

## Regional Programming Highlights



A packed Lighthouse Theatre for the Real Pigeons show. Photo by Lauren Taylor.

The Wheeler Centre's 2021 Regional Program featured partnerships with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Women's Health Goulburn North East, Warrnambool City Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council and Ballarat Mechanics' Institute. The programme strengthened deep, reciprocal partnerships across regional Victoria, with events developed through close consultation to meet each partner's unique needs and resources.

Leveraging the Centre's unique standing in the Australian literary landscape, the 2021 regional series featured a dynamic and diverse program of conversations, panels and workshops with prominent writers, thinkers and leaders. Ongoing COVID restrictions impacted regional travel, leading the Wheeler Centre and its partners to adapt and pivot to digital programming – enabling us to not only still deliver events in regional Victoria, but to ensure they were made available for audiences around the world to watch and listen. In delivering digital and hybrid events, we ensured wider accessibility and inclusivity for audiences, while also offering regional partners exposure to new modes of working.

With generous support from our funders Creative Victoria and the Robert Salzer Foundation, we presented 11 events, talks, panels and workshops for children and adults across Victoria throughout 2021. The programme engaged 27 writers and speakers, 302 live audience members and 1548 online audience members.

Topical events fostered regional engagement, celebrated local perspectives and encouraged public discourse around relevant social issues. The Access and Beyond series, in partnership with Women's Health Goulburn North East, created a meaningful space for community participation, while interactive workshops with Australian Children's Laureate Ursula Dubosarsky in Hamilton encouraged primary-aged children and teens to find their creative voices and develop literacy and writing skills.

Other highlights included a conversation with renowned economist Ross Garnaut, presented in partnership with Ballarat Mechanics' Institute; a hilarious and thought-provoking discussion with John Safran, in partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council; and an inspiring conversation with teen climate activist Jean Hinchliffe at Warrnambool Art Gallery.

In November, Andrew McDonald and Ben Wood presented their entertaining *Real Pigeons* live mystery show to a packed house at Warrnambool's Lighthouse Theatre. After a challenging year, this boisterous and beloved event was a wonderful way to round off 2021 and welcome live audiences back to events.

## Wheeler Education and Youth Programming Highlights



Standing (l to r): Zifa Tanner-Kama, Red Brazil, Tierney Khan, Zuva Goverwa and Eric Vien.  
Kneeling (l to r): Lee Pennefather, Elsa Tuet-Rosenberg and Bernard Caleo at the 2021 Teen Gala.

The voices and experiences of children and teens are a key priority for the Wheeler Centre, and in 2021 we made space for young people both on and off the stage.

Ongoing lockdowns and the shift to online teaching for the majority of the year posed unique challenges as we navigated the switch to online programming alongside the challenge of creating content for time-poor teachers and young people experiencing extreme levels of screen exhaustion. As a result, some programming was rescheduled for 2022 to ensure maximum engagement. The sessions we did deliver were highlights in the Centre's 2021 programming, bringing teens onto the stage and in front of the camera for audiences across Victoria and Australia, and demonstrating a high level of responsiveness to the needs and expectations of young people.

In 2021, our youth-focused events included partnerships with the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority, Australian Poetry, *Kill Your Darlings*, the Immigration Museum, YIRRAMBOI Festival and Koorie Youth Council. We focused on developing meaningful partnerships with organisations working with young people to collaborate on strategies to reach and engage a broad, diverse audience.

Over the year we delivered 20 events for teens, children and educators, including panels, workshops, and professional development sessions held online, at the Wheeler Centre, and in partner venues in Melbourne and regional Victoria. The programme engaged 42 writers and speakers, including nine paid opportunities for teens to share their writing onstage. One panel was entirely curated by a guest youth programmer, two partner events showcased the brightest youth talent in spoken word and public speaking, and a unique roundtable discussion brought together 11 youth arts organisations to discuss possible collaborations.

We also released a six-episode mini-series, *If You Don't Laugh You'll Cry*, featuring young comedians, performers and writers sharing hilarious, poignant creative responses to the pressures of lockdown in bite-sized form – recognising that the value for teens engaging with art during that time was about community and connection, more than curriculum.

# 2021 Events



Paul Kelly. Photo by TJ Garvie.

## **Victorian Premier's Literary Awards 2021**

1 February 2021  
Online

## **Across the Aisle: A Panel Discussion on Justice and Jurisprudence**

7 February 2021  
Royal Botanic Gardens

## **Scalia/Ginsburg: An Opera by Derrick Wang**

7 February 2021  
Royal Botanic Gardens

## **The Wheeler Centre Schools Roundtable**

12 February 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

## **Maaza Mengiste: The Shadow King**

21 February 2021  
His Majesty's Theatre, Perth + Online  
Presented in partnership with Perth Festival

## **Maggie O'Farrell: Hamnet**

28 February 2021  
Adelaide Writers Week + Online  
Presented in partnership with Adelaide Writers Week

## **William Gibson: The Future is Now**

28 February 2021  
Adelaide Writers Week + Online  
Presented in partnership with Adelaide Writers Week

## **Anne Applebaum: Twilight of Democracy**

3 March 2021  
Adelaide Writers Week + Online  
Presented in partnership with Adelaide Writers Week

## **Ear Hustle: Creating Community Beyond Bars**

3 March 2021  
Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) + Online  
Presented in partnership with the Australian International Documentary Conference and ACMI

## **Evelyn Araluen: Dropbear**

12 March 2021  
MPavilion Parkade  
Presented in partnership with MPavilion

## **Women at the Edge: Access and Beyond**

18 March 2021  
Online  
Presented in partnership with Women's Health Goulburn North East

## **No Friend but the Mountains: A Symphonic Song Cycle**

21 March 2021  
Sidney Myer Music Bowl  
Presented in partnership with Zelman Memorial Symphony Orchestra and Arts Centre Melbourne

## **Sarah Krasnostein: The Believer**

24 March 2021  
Conversation Quarter, State Library Victoria  
Presented in partnership with State Library Victoria

## **The Di Gribble Argument 2021: Brave Old World event series**

**Brave Old World: Victor Steffensen on The Present**  
**Brave Old World: Teila Watson on The Past**  
**Brave Old World: Bruce Pascoe on The Future**  
28 March 2021  
Malthouse Outdoor Stage  
Supported by Creative Partnerships Australia

## **Paul Kelly: Love is Strong as Death**

29 March 2021  
Malthouse Outdoor Stage  
Presented in partnership with Malthouse Outdoor Stage

## **Laugh Breaks: Finding the Limelight**

7 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Melbourne International Comedy Festival

## **Very Cheeky Bums with Claire Hooper**

12 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

## **Next Big Thing: Forever Young**

12 April 2021  
The Moat



Sarah Krasnostein at Montalto.  
Photo by Jose Eveline.



We Are Family panel from left: Sally Rugg, Joe Ball, Sage Akouri, Karen Field, Tracey Gaudry and Ro Allen.

**Blaze Your Trail: Youth Activism Workshop with Nevo Zisin**

13 April 2021  
Warrnambool Art Gallery  
Presented in partnership with Warrnambool Art Gallery

**Jean Hinchcliffe: Lead the Way**

13 April 2021  
Warrnambool Art Gallery  
Presented in partnership with Warrnambool Art Gallery

**Jeez Louise: Transplaining**

14 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Melbourne International Comedy Festival

**Pill Pop: Growing Up Disabled in Australia**

15 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

**Sarah Krasnostein**

***Books and Ideas at Montalto***

16 April 2021  
Montalto  
Presented in partnership with Montalto

**Last Words: Voluntary Assisted Dying**

20 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Malthouse Outdoor Stage

**We Are Family: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Family Members**

21 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Respect Victoria

**Take It From Me: Archer Launch Edition**

24 April 2021  
Malthouse Outdoor Stage  
Presented in partnership with Midsumma Festival and Archer

**Artist Meets Expert: Futurism**

26 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Melbourne Knowledge Week

**Artist Meets Expert: Ecology**

27 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Melbourne Knowledge Week

**The 2021 Stella Prize Winner in Conversation**

27 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with The Stella Prize

**Artist Meets Expert: Death Tech**

28 April 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Melbourne Knowledge Week

**Iconic Duos: The Next Chapter Writers and Mentors**

30 April 2021  
Carriageworks, Elston Room  
Presented in partnership with Sydney Writers' Festival

**Mapping Culture: Something Old, Something New**

4 May 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

**Women at the Edge: Disaster and Beyond**

4 May 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with Women's Health Goulburn North East

**Mapping Culture: Objects of Inspiration**

5 May 2021  
The Immigration Museum  
Presented in partnership with the Immigration Museum

**Mapping Culture: Treaty**

6 May 2021  
The Wheeler Centre  
Presented in partnership with YIRRAMBOI Festival

**Can You Keep a Secret?: Media Rights and the Need to Know**

9 May 2021  
Ulumbarra Theatre  
Presented in partnership with Bendigo Writers Festival



Daniel James, Susie Anderson and Kee'ahn at The Salon Series: Country and Culture.



Shantel Wetherall in conversation with Broadly Speaking: Meaning, Mysticism and Manifestation panellists (clockwise from top left) Lillian Ahenkan, Erica McCalman, Lay the Mystic and Amal Awad.

**Next Big Thing: Inside Out**

10 May 2021  
The Moat

**Emerging Writers' Festival Programme Launch: The Words That Shaped Us**

11 May 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

Presented in partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival

**Young Mob Yarns**

13 May 2021  
The Wheeler Centre + Online

Presented in partnership with YIRRAMBOI Festival and Koorie Youth Council

**Garry Disher**

***Books and Ideas at Montalto***

14 May 2021  
Montalto

Presented in partnership with Montalto

**On Unity: Refugees, Connection and Community**

18 June 2021  
Online

Presented in partnership with the Refugee Council of Australia

**Next Big Thing: Emerging Writers' Festival edition**

21 June 2021  
Online

Presented in partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival

**Iconic Duos: The Power of Mentorships**

23 June 2021  
Online

Presented in partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival

**The Next Chapter: 2021 Lunchtime Q&A**

30 June 2021  
Online

Supported by the Aesop Foundation

**The Little Coven**

6 July 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

**Meaning, Mysticism and Manifestation  
*Broadly Speaking***

6 July 2021  
Online

Presented in partnership with The Capitol and RMIT Culture

Supported by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and family and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

**The Salon Series: Country and Culture**

9 July 2021  
Conversation Quarter, State Library Victoria + Online  
Presented in partnership with State Library Victoria

**Next Big Thing: Hot Desk Edition #1**

12 July 2021  
The Moat

**Ahead of the Game: Sport, Storytelling and Symbolism**

***Broadly Speaking***

13 July 2021  
The Wheeler Centre

Presented in partnership with Women in Sports Media Forum, with support from Our Watch National Media Engagement Program and Emma Race  
Supported by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and family and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

**Rage and Dissent**

***Broadly Speaking***

22 July 2021  
Online

Presented in partnership with The Capitol and RMIT Culture and supported by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and family and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

**Pursuing Justice: Human Rights in an Age of Crisis**

26 July 2021  
Online

Presented in partnership with Free Palestine Melbourne



Courtney Hagen, Kasey Symons, Angela Pippas, Kate O'Halloran and Rana Hussain at Broadly Speaking: Ahead of the Game.



Paul Biel and Gordon Koang perform for On Unity: Refugees, Community and Connection.

**The Mother Load: Motherhood, Trauma and Resilience**

***Broadly Speaking***

2 August 2021

Podcast

Supported by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and family and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

**Parliamentary Privilege: Bias, Boys' Clubs and Women in Politics**

***Broadly Speaking***

3 August 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with The Capitol and RMIT Culture

Supported by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and family and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

**Poetry Month Gala**

4 August 2021

The Wheeler Centre + Online

Presented in partnership with Red Room Poetry

**Ross Garnaut: Reset**

8 August 2021

Podcast

Presented in partnership with Ballarat Mechanics' Institute

**Allee Richards: Small Joys of Real Life**

8 September 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Melbourne Writers Festival, and supported by the City of Melbourne, Victorian Government and ABC Radio Melbourne

**Plain English Speaking Awards: 2021 Victorian State Final**

10 August 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

**In Our Nature**

14 September 2021

Podcast + Online

Presented in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and the Victoria Nature Festival project partners

**The Power of Protest**

15 September 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Refugee Action Collective

**Ancestral Connections**

16 September 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with the National Gallery of Victoria

**Next Big Thing: Becoming and Belonging**

27 September 2021

Online

**The Gender Binary and Beyond**

28 September 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Women's Health Goulburn North East

**Miles Allinson: In Moonland**

***Melbourne City Reads***

29 September 2021

Online

Supported by the City of Melbourne, Victorian Government and ABC Radio Melbourne

**Jonathan Franzen: Crossroads**

***Postcards from Abroad***

5 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Byron Writers Festival and Newcastle Writers Festival

**Media in Exile: Press Freedoms and Myanmar**

6 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Amnesty International and Free Media Myanmar



Sarah Krasnostein and Fran Lebowitz in conversation for Postcards From Abroad.

**Future Voices: Decolonising Australian Media**  
***Broadly Speaking***

7 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Our Watch and supported by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and family and Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

**Fringe Debate: Break the Internet**

11 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Melbourne Fringe

**Pah! Deaf Storytelling Night**

12 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Melbourne Fringe with the support of City of Melbourne Arts Grant

**Jonathan Safran: Puff Piece**

13 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council

**David Sedaris: A Carnival of Snackery**  
***Postcards from Abroad***

14 October 2021

Online

**Next Big Thing: Now and Then**

18 October 2021

Online

**Present Sense: The Problem of Consciousness**

20 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Melbourne-Monash Consciousness Research

**The 143-Storey Treehouse with Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton**

23 October 2021

Online

**Fran Lebowitz**  
***Postcards From Abroad***

25 October 2021

Online



Mapping Culture: Something Old Something New from left: Tahnee Edwards, Tierney Khan and Aadhya Wijegoonawardena.

**Emily Bitto: Wild Abandon**  
***Melbourne City Reads***

26 October 2021

Online

Supported by the City of Melbourne, Victorian Government and ABC Radio Melbourne

**Write for Your Life! with Ursula Dubosarsky**  
**(two sessions)**

26 October 2021

Online

**Rewriting Masculinity: Larrikins, Power and Accountability**

27 October 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Our Watch

**Rabih Alameddine: The Wrong End of the Telescope**  
***Postcards From Abroad***

28 October 2021

Online

**Paul Auster: Burning Boy**  
***Postcards From Abroad***

3 November 2021

Online

**OutLoud Poetry Slam Final**

4 November 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Australian Poetry

**Ruth Ozeki: The Book of Form and Emptiness**  
***Postcards From Abroad***

9 November 2021

Online

**Aural Events: Best of Australian Poetry**

10 November 2021

Online

Presented in partnership with Australian Poetry

**Professional Development for Secondary Educators: Words and Pictures**

11 November 2021

Online



Filming for My Mirka. Photo by Jose Maria



The Next Big Thing Hot Desk Edition #1 from left: Alex Creece, Georgia Kartas and Natasha Hertanto.

### **Teen Gala**

11 November 2021  
The Wheeler Centre + Online

### **Tony Birch**

#### ***Books and Ideas at Montalto***

12 November 2021  
Montalto  
Presented in partnership with Montalto

### **Together in Literature: 100 Years of PEN International**

15 November 2021  
Online  
Presented in partnership with PEN Melbourne and supported by the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund

### **State of the (Writing) Nation: Alice Pung**

16 November 2021  
Online  
Presented in partnership with Writers Victoria

### **Islands in the Stream**

17 November 2021  
Online

### **Melbourne Asia Game Changers**

18 November 2021  
Online  
Presented in partnership with Asia Society Australia and the City of Melbourne

### **Real Pigeons: Writing and Illustration Workshop**

19 November 2021  
Hamilton Performing Arts Centre  
Presented in partnership with Hamilton Performing Arts Centre

### **Real Pigeons Spy High**

20 November 2021  
Lighthouse Theatre, Warnnambool  
Presented in partnership with Lighthouse Theatre

### **My Mirka**

22 November 2021  
Online  
Presented in partnership with Jewish Museum of Australia

### **Maxine Beneba Clarke: How Decent Folk Behave *Melbourne City Reads***

24 November 2021  
The Wheeler Centre + online  
Supported by the City of Melbourne, the Victorian Government and ABC Radio Melbourne

### **Next Big Thing: Small Press Network Book of the Year Award Edition**

26 November 2021  
Online  
Presented in partnership with the Small Press Network

### **Next Big Thing: Hot Desk Edition #2**

29 November 2021  
The Moat  
Supported by Readings Foundation

### **The Stories We Tell Ourselves video series**

**Maame Blue & Mykaela Saunders**  
**Burhana Islam & Jasmin McGaughy**  
**Alex Falase-Koya & Alice Boyle**  
**MC Angel aka Shauna O'Briain & Rafeif Ismail**  
**Elle McNicol & Cath Moore**  
**Sareeta Domingo & Maxine Beneba Clarke**

29 November 2021  
Online

### **New Narratives, New Structures: Fiction**

#### ***The Stories We Tell Ourselves***

30 November 2021  
Online

### **New Narratives, New Structures: Children's and YA**

#### ***The Stories We Tell Ourselves***

1 December 2021  
Online

### **Richard Price and Lorraine Adams**

#### ***Postcards From Abroad***

2 December 2021  
Online

### **Siri Hustvedt: Mothers, Fathers, and Others**

#### ***Postcards From Abroad***

7 December 2021  
Online

# Industry Initiatives

## The Next Chapter



# The Next Chapter

2021 marked the third intake of writers under the Wheeler Centre's mentorship programme for emerging literary talent, The Next Chapter. Made possible by the support of the Aesop Foundation, 2021 represented the fourth year of this longstanding funding partnership that has allowed the Centre to connect with 40 participants across the 2018, 2019 and 2020 cohorts. Thank you also to George and Rosa Morstyn for your generous annual donation towards supporting this landmark programme.

Ten outstanding new writers were provided with a funding stipend of \$15,000 each and were matched with a prominent Australian writer as their mentor. The writers selected in 2020 for the 2021 Next Chapter scheme were:

Sharlene Allsopp (mentor: Mirandi Riwoe)  
Bigoa Chuol (mentor: Maxine Beneba Clarke)  
Hasib Hourani (mentor: Evelyn Araluen)  
Allanah Hunt (mentor: Claire Christian)  
Angelina Hurley (mentor: Shane Maloney)  
Tim Loveday (mentor: Anna Krien)  
Khin Myint (mentor: Kristina Olsson)  
Mia Nie (mentor: Sarah Howell)  
Oliver Reeson (mentor: Maria Tumarkin)  
Jonathan Slottje (mentor: Bruce Pascoe)

The support provided by The Next Chapter scheme is critical in allowing participants the time and space to write, and offering them valuable insight and practical advice for navigating the publishing industry. The Wheeler Centre is proud that this commitment to new writing saw the negotiation, marketing and eventual publication of two titles in 2021 and one scheduled for publication in 2022:

*Born Into This* by Adam Thompson (University of Queensland Press), published February 2021.

*Dropbear* by Evelyn Araluen (University of Queensland Press), published March 2021.

*Sadvertising* by Ennis Čehić (Penguin Random House), scheduled for release for release in early 2022.

By connecting Next Chapter writers directly with publishers, this important initiative is not only directly supporting emerging writers, but is also delivering on a key element of the Wheeler Centre's strategy: to support and connect the Australian publishing industry. The Next Chapter is currently in discussion with publishers regarding a number of new manuscripts by writers from the scheme's second and third year.

In April, a partnership with the Sydney Writers' Festival saw Next Chapter writers featured as part of an Iconic Duos panel event and in May we opened application dates for our 2021 intake of Next Chapter writers.

In total, 679 applications for the fourth year of the Next Chapter scheme were received, a seven percent increase on 2020's 633 entries. This was a welcome outcome in yet another year of uncertainty and instability, and reiterated the importance of the scheme's assistance to writers experiencing various pressures, only heightened during the pandemic.

The 2021 intake of writers for the 2022 Next Chapter scheme were announced by a judging panel comprising Claire G Coleman, Jeanine Leane, Fiona Wright and Arnold Zable at a special Wheeler Centre event in December. They are:

Jumaana Abdu (NSW)  
Jose da Costa (WA)  
Josie/Jocelyn Deane (VIC)  
Monikka Elish (NSW)  
Tristen Harwood (VIC)  
Brooke Maddison (QLD)  
Luke Patterson (NSW)  
Micaela Sahhar (VIC)  
Mykaela Saunders (QLD)  
Anne-Marie Te Whiu (NSW)

We look forward to welcoming and working with these talented writers in 2022.

## Signal Boost



The Wheeler Centre's podcast development programme, Signal Boost, continued to deliver benefits for participants and mentors alike. We are grateful to the Ian Potter Foundation for its ongoing investment and belief in this project.

In 2021, ten outstanding emerging podcasters were recruited and matched with experienced industry mentors. The 2021-22 Signal Boost participants and mentors comprised:

Kirby Fenwick (mentor: Gab Burke)  
Michael Hartup (mentor: James Parkinson)  
Eric Jiang (mentor: Xen Nhà)  
Daizy Maan (mentor: Bethany Atkinson-Quinton)  
Maya Pask (mentor: Johanna Bell)  
Elise Romaszko (mentor: Sarah Mashman)  
Najma Sambul (mentors: Allison Chan and Karishma Luthria)  
Carly Stone (mentor: Michelle Macklem)  
Faith Tabalujan (mentor: Jo Lauder)

Participants were able to access workshops to develop their audio skills and a total of six workshops were delivered with industry guests including *Guardian Australia's* Ellen Leabeater and Audiocraft's Selena Shannon on topics such as interviewing, constructing audio narratives, and editing and mixing. A further six workshops were delivered by the Wheeler Centre's Senior Audio Producer Maddy Macquine. As part of the Wheeler Centre's investment into the programme, each participant received an equipment pack containing \$1500 worth of audio equipment and tools, including microphones and headphones.

While some outcomes of the programme were impacted by COVID-related delays to equipment delivery and illness among participants and facilitators, the programme remains on track for completion by the end of May 2022. In 2022, the participants will have the opportunity to attend further workshops and produce paid audio works for the Wheeler Centre's podcast platform.

Previous Signal Boost participants continue to benefit from the support and mentoring they received through the programme. Karishma Luthria (2020) published the work she was producing during her time in Signal Boost, *Australia's caste divide*, on Radio National's Earshot program, and has since joined *Guardian Australia* as a podcast producer.

Maddison Miller's (2020) Signal Boost project, *Yilabara Nanga*, is currently being exhibited at the University of Melbourne and in 2021 Miller joined the Wheeler Centre for In Our Nature, a panel discussion for the Victoria Nature Festival exploring the many different ways we can reconnect with nature and advocate for its care.

Cherie Minniecon (2020) and her mentor Timmah Ball took part in an engaging panel discussion presented in partnership with the Emerging Writers' Festival, *Iconic Duos: The Power of Creative Mentorships*, about the critical support mentors provide to emerging podcasters.

In a year that posed many challenges, Signal Boost participants rose to the occasion and took advantage of the opportunities on offer to advance their audio careers. The Wheeler Centre is proud to connect with these emerging podcasters and work alongside them for this professional development programme.

## Hot Desk Fellowships

After the Wheeler Centre's 2020 Hot Desk Fellows were unable to make use of their desk spaces for a full year due to lockdowns, the opportunity was renewed for those same writers in 2021. Thank you to the Readings Foundation, whose ongoing support made these 2020-21 fellowships possible.

In the first half of the year, the Centre welcomed the first intake of seven writers to their desks for a ten-week stint. The second and third intakes were impacted due to subsequent lockdowns and restrictions, but all writers ultimately will have completed their residencies by early 2022.

In response to these challenges, the program focused on other components of the fellowship, including building opportunities for digital connection. With some recipients located in regional areas or interstate, the creation of an online channel as a space for informal conversation between the fellows helped the cohorts remain connected.

Hot Desk Fellowship recipients also have the opportunity to appear in the Wheeler Centre's programme, sharing readings of their work as part of the Next Big Thing event series. Across two events, the 2020-21 Fellows shared powerful readings of screenplays, comics, fiction, non-fiction and poetry. At these events, the recipients were able to finally meet in-person, connect with the previous fellows and share their work with live audiences after two years of digital-only connections.

The Hot Desk Fellowships will return in 2022 for their tenth year, with 21 fellowships to be offered thanks to the generous support of the Readings Foundation and the Just Pretending theatre group.

# Our supporters

## Donors

The Wheeler Centre is indebted to the generosity of individual donors whose annual contributions lay the foundations for the work that we do. Thank you for your generous investment in future-proofing our organisation, as we create a more sustainable and impactful model to best serve the community through the celebration of books, writing and ideas.

Stories have the ability to inspire change, create understanding and enrich our lives. By donating to the Wheeler Centre in 2021, donors enabled us to share the stories and conversations that matter to Australia and the world.

Thanks to a number of significant and generous contributions, the Centre was able to raise \$123,225 in donations. The 2021 annual tax appeal coincided with Melbourne's return to another lengthy COVID-19 lockdown and, once again, our donors rose to the occasion. A donation video featuring the Centre's patrons Maureen and Tony Wheeler AO and a range of Australia's leading writers and industry leaders – including Evelyn Araluen, Andrew Denton, Mark Rubbo, Christos Tsiolkas and others – was produced to celebrate the importance of giving to the Wheeler Centre with the aim of reaching our community at home. The campaign surpassed its target, raising \$50,638 and resulted in many new donors giving at our newest giving level: 'Supporter'.

In March 2021, the Wheeler Centre delivered the Di Gribble Argument, commissioning essays from three First Nations writers on the topic of climate change and caring for Country, which culminated in a full day of events at Malthouse Outdoor Stage. Thanks to Creative Partnerships Australia Plus 1 Grant, we were able to match \$50,000 in individual donations, doubling the impact of their gifts to enable this exciting project. Thank you to all the donors who contributed to this important program.

We wish to thank our Game Changers whose ongoing generosity, vision and commitment to the Centre is unparalleled. Thanks to George and Rosa Morstyn, for their sustained support of The Next Chapter writers' scheme in 2021, as well as their generous contribution towards Wheeler Teens programming, which saw the conceptualisation of a series of three events on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths (STEAM) set to be delivered in early 2022. Thanks to Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and family for their generous contribution towards the Broadly Speaking series, which celebrates female writers, stories and perspectives. Across 2020-21, 12 digital events featured brilliant local and international feminist thinkers and engaged thousands of audience members worldwide.

Finally, thank you to our Conversation Starters who give consistently year-on-year and whose ongoing support, advocacy and engagement in our work is deeply felt across the organisation.

Donations of every size make an impact and help to keep the conversations going. We thank all of you who contributed throughout the year whose names are not listed. Thank you for being a part of our unique story and helping us to support Australia's writers and storytellers to share theirs.

## Patrons

Maureen Wheeler AO  
Tony Wheeler AO

## Game Changers \$25,000+

Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and family  
George and Rosa Morstyn

## Conversation Starters \$5000+

Anonymous  
The Gantner Family  
Jennifer Gilchrist  
Elke Gjergja  
The Hudson Family  
Chaman Sidhu  
Brigitte Smith  
Wendy Whelan  
Count Charitable Foundation – Saward Dawson and Staff

## Enquiring Minds \$1000+

David Bardas  
Dr Steve Connors  
Glenda De Marinis  
Carrillo Gantner AC and Ziyin Gantner  
Ron Rowley  
Keith Richards OAM  
Janet Whiting AM and Phil Lukies

## Supporters \$500+

Dr Marianne Broadbent  
Michael Cowen  
June Corry  
Jenni Koch  
Lu Lin  
Elizabeth Loftus  
Gwenllyn McIntosh  
Susan Oliver AM  
Julie Pinkham  
Victoria Ponsford  
Prof. Steven Williams  
Sarah Yeomans  
Michael and Radhika Santhanam-Martin

## Government Partners

The Wheeler Centre acknowledges the incredible support received in 2021 from our major government funders Creative Victoria, the Australian Office for the Arts and the City of Melbourne. Their adaptability and generosity boosted our resilience as we responded to the ongoing challenges of COVID-19.

Most notably, the Wheeler Centre was successful in its ambitious \$500,000 application to the Australian Government's COVID-19 Sustainability Fund in January 2021. This national funding scheme offered crucial core funding to offset the financial losses incurred from COVID-19, allowing us to further invest in digital capacity building efforts to deliver high-quality digital-first and hybrid (live and digital) programming throughout the year without compromising our commitment to present at least 70% free and low-cost content to audience members.

Creative Victoria's Strategic Investment Fund Round 4 funding in 2021, paired with major contributions from Rounds 1 and 2 funding in 2020, have offered invaluable support across the past two years and cemented Creative Victoria as the Wheeler Centre's most significant funding body.

In 2021, the Wheeler Centre again delivered the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards on behalf of the Hon. Minister Danny Pearson MP and the Hon. Premier Daniel Andrews, with support from Creative Victoria.

A successful new application to Creative Victoria's 2022-23 Regional Touring Grant in 2021 will see the Wheeler Centre extending on its programming and impact within regional Victoria, working meaningfully with existing partners, including Warrnambool City Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Women's Health Goulburn North East, Ballarat Mechanics' Institute and Castlemaine State Festival.

Finally, at the close of 2021, the Wheeler Centre successfully reapplied for multi-year Creative Victoria Funding through the 2022-25 Creative Enterprise Program, ensuring that we continue to receive crucial core funding year-on-year.

In 2021, the Wheeler Centre continued to receive multi-year funding through the City of Melbourne's Triennial Arts Programme 2021-24 and we thank the City of Melbourne and Lord Mayor Sally Capp for their ongoing support.

## Corporate Partners

Corporate Partnerships form a major strategic growth area for the Wheeler Centre and we acknowledge the incredible existing partnerships we hold with Montalto, Sofitel on Collins, Shiff & Company, JBWere, Meltwater, RTR Productions, Two Birds Brewing and St. Ali Coffee Roasters. Over the past two years, these partners have felt the challenges of COVID-19 in myriad ways and we have valued their ongoing loyalty and support as we work together across industries to build back the City of Melbourne and deepen the value of our partnerships.

In 2021, the Wheeler Centre established a new corporate partnership with one of Australia's premier law firms MinterEllison that will see the Centre delivering a series of three live, bespoke talks for staff across their national offices in the first quarter of 2022. Hosted by long-time Wheeler Centre collaborator Sally Warhaft on the topic of 'Creating Change', this mini conversation series is the beginning of what is sure to be an exciting and enriching new partnership with many opportunities for collaboration ahead.

## Trusts and Foundations

Trusts and Foundations represent 15% of the Wheeler Centre's total annual fundraising efforts, with major investments from our multi-year partnerships enabling us to support writers and artists to develop and share their unique stories.

In 2021, the Aesop Foundation supported a fourth year of The Next Chapter writers' scheme, continuing to offer unique mentorship, training, and funding to support ten budding Australian writers from diverse or underrepresented backgrounds. Over the life of the scheme to date, we've seen a number of publication outcomes for Next Chapter fellows which – while not the aim – speaks to the career-altering nature of what we are offering these incredible emerging writers. In 2021, exciting highlights included the publication of Evelyn Araluen's poetry collection, *Dropbear*, in March, as well as *Born Into This* by Adam Thompson, published by University of Queensland Press in February. In addition to this, Ennis Čehić's short story collection, *Sadvertising*, is set to be released by Penguin Random House in early 2022.

A major gift of \$200,000 from the Aesop Foundation's 2020 Support Fund has enabled the Wheeler Centre to engage in a new website redevelopment project that will be launched in 2022. By allowing us to modernise our website, this funding will make our events and online content more streamlined and accessible. Thank you to the Aesop Foundation for your incredible and sustained support.

The Ian Potter Foundation's generous multi-year support of the Signal Boost podcast programme has seen a second cohort of ten aspiring podcasters participate in an intensive six-month mentorship and professional development programme, led by some of Australia's most celebrated audio experts. This forms the second successful year in our exciting three-year relationship with the Ian Potter Foundation.

The Readings Foundation generously supported the Hot Desk Fellowships for its tenth year, offering 21 writers a stipend and desk space to write within the Wheeler Centre building. We thank the Readings Foundation and Mark Rubbo OAM for their ongoing commitment to this life-changing programme, which has seen the Wheeler Centre support more than 200 emerging writers over the past decade.

In a new multi-year partnership with the E. W. Cole Foundation, the Wheeler Centre will launch a new series of annual lectures honouring the life and legacy of the Melbourne literary icon. Set to commence in 2021, the inaugural lecture was postponed to 2022 in response to COVID-19 lockdowns and we thank the E. W. Cole Foundation for their ongoing adaptability and generosity as we look forward to launching this exciting event series next year.

Finally, in 2021, trusts and foundations enabled the delivery of a number of key Wheeler Centre programmes, including the Wheeler Kids regional programme, with support from the Robert Salzer Foundation, the Di Gribble Argument through the generosity of Creative Partnerships Australia, and the Broadly Speaking feminist conversation series with support from Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

We would like to extend an enormous thanks to all the trusts and foundations whose contributions sustain our ambitions and enable us to dream big.

# Thank you to our partners

The Wheeler Centre is deeply grateful to new and existing partners and the many cultural partners, booksellers and publishers we collaborated with across the year to promote books, writing and ideas.

The contribution and commitment of the Wheeler Centre's generous supporters enables us to champion writers, support the literary sector and elevate public conversation locally and internationally. In 2021, more than ever, we are indebted to the support and partnerships of the following organisations.

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## Government



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## Trusts and Foundations

the Aēsop Foundation



creative  
partnerships  
australia

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## Corporate Partners



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## Programme Partners




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## Regional Partners




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## Accessibility and Inclusion Partners




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## Resident Organisations



# Our people

## Message from our People & Culture Committee Chair



The Wheeler Centre's vision to inspire curiosity, connection and engagement applies equally to our people and culture. In a year that provided seemingly endless challenges to Melbourne's cultural community, we were guided by our core principles

such as focusing on people and building a culture that listens.

CEO Caro Llewellyn and her leadership team continued to focus on supporting the people who make up our wider community, staff and audiences alike, through various stages of the pandemic. Continuing flexibility allowed events to be produced in online, hybrid and in-person formats, sometimes with changes at very short notice. Support was also extended to our resident organisations and their people.

Given the challenging external environment, it was pleasing that we were able to progress several of the people and culture strategies laid out in our three-year strategic plan.

An evolved organisation design was implemented along with improved ways of working that foster increased collaboration, as well as role and workflow clarity between functional areas such as programming, production, marketing and development. We advanced our people and culture framework with the introduction of an internal Human Resources role, the implementation of a Human Resources information system that enables insights and process efficiencies, and foundational work on simplifying and consolidating people and culture related policies.

Importantly, in a year that saw significant recruitment, we were guided by our Equity Action Plan to adopt new hiring practices to support a diverse and inclusive environment. The results are already encouraging and I look forward to seeing these continue to bear fruit in future years.

Everything we achieved in 2021 for our audiences, resident organisations and partners was made possible by our people. Thank you to everyone for their passion, agility and hard work that enables the ongoing success of the Wheeler Centre.

**Chaman Sidhu** People and Culture Chair

## **Our Board**

**Susan Oliver AM – Chair**  
**Rebecca Batties**  
**Marcus Fazio**  
**John Gibbins**  
**Will Hayward (until November)**  
**Corrie Perkin**  
**Julie Pinkham**  
**Adrian Sculthorpe**  
**Chaman Sidhu**

## **Our Staff**

CEO – **Caro Llewellyn**  
Head of Programming – **Veronica Sullivan**  
Head of Marketing and Communications – **Emily Harms** (until June)  
Head of Digital and Marketing – **Daniel Coghlan** (from October)  
Head of Development – **Romy Ladowsky**  
Head of Special Projects – **Sophie Black**  
Head of Production and Relationships – **Gabrielle Ryan**  
Head of Finance – **Melanie Lin**  
Executive Assistant – **Sally Rosevear**  
Programming Producer – **Lauren Taylor**  
Programming Administrator – **Christa Jonathan** (until August), **Diem Nguyen** (from July)  
Youth Programming Manager – **Bec Kavanagh**  
Youth Programming Coordinator – **Alice Glenn** (from July)  
Communications Specialist – **Lise Leitner** (until July)  
Marketing and Communications Coordinator – **Oliver Reeson** (from July)  
Website and Content Producer – **Keshia Contini** (until June)  
Digital Coordinator – **Nadiyah Abdulrahim** (from September)  
Marketing Manager – **Shannon Hick** (until October), **Peter Ritchie** (from August)  
Development Coordinator – **Brigid Reid**  
Ticketing and CRM Coordinator – **Claire Flynn** (until November)  
Audio Producer – **Bethany Atkinson-Quinton** (until March)  
Senior Audio Producer – **Maddy Macquine** (from May)  
Events Manager – **Mia McAuslan** (until March), **Andrew Mabbott-Tighe** (from March)  
Production Manager – **Johnboy Davidson** (until May), **Simon Cotter** (from June)  
Technical Coordinator – **Jose Eveline**  
Venue and Office Coordinator – **Harry Reid** (until May), **Oliver Reeson** (May to June), **Isabel Frías** (from May), **Joshua Barnes** (from June)  
Accounts – **Sam Ryan**

## **Casual Front and Back of House Team**

**Millie Baylis**  
**Anastasha Boado**  
**Anne Bravos**  
**Bridget Caldwell-Bright**  
**Faith Everard**  
**Isabel Frías**  
**Zoe Kaser**  
**Charlie Kerekes**  
**Doni Marmer**  
**Leah Jing McIntosh**  
**Luke Meehan**  
**Adalya Nash Hussein**  
**Diem Nguyen**  
**Sarah Occhino**  
**Xanthea O'Connor**  
**Danny Silva Soberano**  
**Cher Tan**  
**Aisha Trambas**  
**Inez Trambas**  
**Folole Tupuola**  
**Nevo Zisin**

# Financial Review

## Message from our Audit and Risk Committee Chair



In 2021, the pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the Victorian arts community.

The Wheeler Centre continued to innovate and manage its operations through the impacts of the pandemic.

With the assistance of COVID-19 assisted government grants, the Centre was able to retain our staff and restructure our programs through the management of costs and a successful transition to digital events and online content.

**John Gibbins** Audit and Risk Committee Chair

## Operating Activities

The Wheeler Centre has continued to be significantly impacted by COVID-19. The number of live events in 2021 were still 71% below pre-pandemic level due to snap lockdowns and capacity restrictions. As a result of these significantly compressed activities, box office revenue and venue hire revenue were 66% below 2019 levels, at \$352,000 (2019: \$1.026 million).

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 4 and Australian Government's COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund to support its operations and adapt new operating models through a comprehensive strategic review. The Wheeler Centre sought to reduce expenditure as far as possible, whilst maintain staff at the same level as 2020. Apart from employee expenses, all other operating expenses reflected a reduction of 72% on prior-pandemic level. The Wheeler Centre also provided rent relief to support the six literature organisations and the Moat Café residing in the building to assist them through the pandemic.

In 2021, recurrent funding from the Creative Victoria was \$1.54 million and recurrent funding from the City of Melbourne was \$50,000 (2020: \$1.6 million). Total non-recurrent funding for the 2021 period was \$967,000 (2020: \$623,000), largely consisting of additional funding support due to the pandemic.

## 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.

The value of the Wheeler Endowment Fund has recovered from \$9.91 million to \$10.94 million assisted by no withdrawals made in 2021.

The Wheeler Endowment Fund recorded investment income of \$452,950 less investment expenses of \$57,119 resulting in net investment income of \$395,831.

The value of the fund's investment portfolio increased by \$720,903. The increase of \$720,903 plus the net investment income of \$395,831 contributed to the comprehensive income of \$1,565,245 for the year.

## Auspice Agreements

### City of Literature Office

The Wheeler Centre has 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.

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

### Blak & Bright

Blak & Bright is a four-day First Nations Literary Festival based in Melbourne celebrating the diverse expressions of First Nations writers. In September 2021, the Wheeler Centre entered an auspice agreement with Blak & Bright. Grants and donations received for Blak & Bright are first recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until the funds are used for the operations of Blak & Bright. The Wheeler Centre provided both in-kind support and financial support to Blak & Bright.

# Financial Performance

## Operations

The Centre's operating revenue (excluding investment movement and depreciation) was \$497,675 in 2021.

The operating revenue consisted of a capital grant of \$200,000 for the Wheeler Centre's website redevelopment project. The cost of the redevelopment project was recognised as an asset.

The net income from the Wheeler Endowment investments was a surplus of \$1.12 million. This consisted of investment income of \$456,521 plus the net gain in the value of the endowment of \$720,903 less investment expenses of \$57,119.

## Balance Sheet

Net assets of the Wheeler Centre amount to \$11,281,253 (2020: \$9,716,011), of which \$10,940,902 relates to the Wheeler Endowment Fund.

Financial assets decreased by 22% to \$1.83 million and total liabilities decreased by 37% to \$1.63 million driven predominantly by a reduction in income in advance and long-service leave liabilities.

Cash and Cash Equivalents as of 31 December 2021 was \$1,658,147, however of the \$1,658,147 held in cash and cash equivalents, \$1,197,493 are restricted funds for City of Literature office, Blak & Bright and other future programs that cannot be used to support the Wheeler Centre's core operating activities.

## Summary of Results 2021

Financial Performance	2021 \$	2020 \$
<b>NET INCOME FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>		
Creative Victoria – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	1,541,600	1,541,600
Creative Victoria – Premier's Literary Award Grant	265,000	240,000
Creative Victoria – Regional Tour Grant	37,804	13,476
Creative Victoria – Strategic Investment Fund Stage 1	0	207,680
Creative Victoria – Strategic Investment Fund Stage 2	55,625	59,375
Creative Victoria – Strategic Investment Fund Stage 4	100,000	0
City of Melbourne – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	50,000	60,000
Australia Council for the Arts – Multi-Year Organisation Grant	0	103,030
Federal Grant COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund	500,000	0
Other Government Grants	9,091	102,724
Event & Resources Income	352,320	179,767
Sponsorship & Donations	161,386	130,330
Distribution from Foundation Funds	616,745	281,755
Other Income	3,106	21,488
<b>Total operating revenue</b>	<b>3,692,677</b>	<b>2,941,225</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>		
Employee Expenses	(1,895,929)	(1,893,312)
Event Generated Expenses	(295,422)	(227,598)
Prize Money	(375,500)	(403,750)
Marketing and Promotion Expenses	(110,256)	(57,837)
Digital Publishing Expenses	(70,621)	(32,730)
Operating Expenses	(131,307)	(208,201)
Facilities Expenses	(315,967)	(247,768)
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>(3,195,003)</b>	<b>(3,071,196)</b>
<b>Net Income from Operating Activities</b>	497,675	(129,971)
<b>NET INCOME FROM NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Interest Received in the Bank	3,571	4,471
<b>Philanthropic Funds Flow</b>		
The Wheeler Endowment Investment Portfolio Movement (Restricted)	1,116,734	182,865
Distribution to Operating Activities	0	(188,902)
<b>Philanthropic Funds Flow</b>	1,120,305	(6,037)
<b>Net Income from Non-Operating Activities</b>	1,120,305	(1,296)
<b>NET RESULT FROM AUSPICE PROJECTS</b>		
<b>City of Literature Office</b>		
Government Grants – City of Literature Office	257,329	292,422
Project expenditure – City of Literature Office	(257,329)	(292,422)
<b>Blak &amp; Bright</b>		
Government Grants – Blak & Bright	71,525	0
Distribution from Foundation Funds – Blak & Bright	1,200	0
Project expenditure – Blak & Bright	(72,725)	0
<b>Net result from Auspice Projects</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>
<b>Net result from transactions before depreciation</b>	<b>1,617,979</b>	<b>(131,267)</b>
Depreciation and amortisation	(52,737)	(112,012)
<b>Net result from transactions after depreciation</b>	<b>1,565,242</b>	<b>(243,278)</b>
<b>COMPREHENSIVE RESULT</b>	<b>1,565,242</b>	<b>(243,278)</b>

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Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas  
trading as The Wheeler Centre.

[wheelercentre.com](http://wheelercentre.com)



**The Wheeler Centre**  
Books Writing Ideas



**Melbourne  
City of  
Literature**

