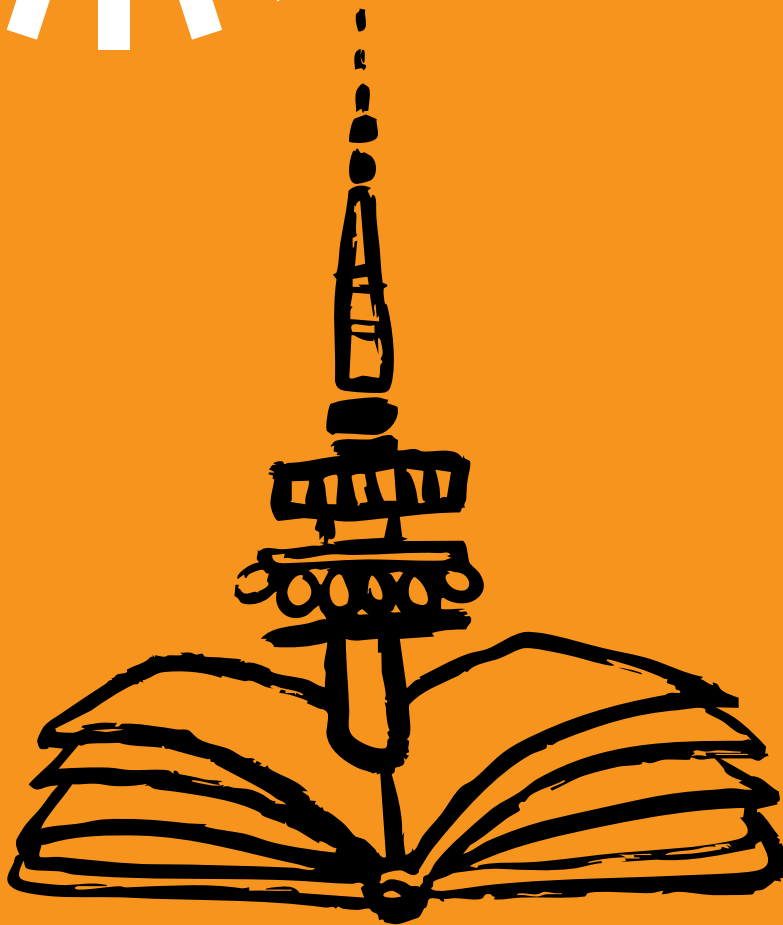




Canberra
Writers
Festival



2025

22-26 OCTOBER

canberrawritersfestival.com.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of Canberra and this region.

Partners

Canberra Writers Festival is grateful for the support of all our partners.

GOVERNMENT PARTNER



MAJOR SPONSOR

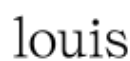


FOUNDATION PARTNERS



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Welcome



The ACT Government is proud to continue its support of the Canberra Writers Festival.

Each year, the Festival celebrates literature, creativity and the exchange of ideas, reflecting the diversity of our city and the value we place on storytelling in all its forms.

Over the years, the Festival has grown into one of Australia's leading literary events. It has welcomed some of the world's most influential writers and thinkers including Tim Winton, Irvine Welsh, Gloria Steinem and Alain de Botton.

This year's program promises to be especially engaging featuring leading Australian authors. Jane Harper will open the Festival and audiences will hear from Peter Greste, Elizabeth Finkel, Heather Rose, Trent Dalton and Garry Disher among many others.

It is great to see the Festival continuing to enhance the experience for visitors with a new Festival marquee on the Patrick White Lawns which will serve as a central hub, and the introduction of late-night programming at Verity Lane and Smith's Alternative. This will bring new energy to the city centre and attract new audiences.

This year also sees the ACT Book of the Year Awards incorporated into the program recognising and celebrating excellence in the ACT's writing community.

The Festival continues to champion diverse voices, featuring writers who identify as LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, from migrant backgrounds, and people with disability. It also highlights the voices of local writers such as Chris Hammer, Omar Musa and Virginia Haussegger.

Young readers will be encouraged to explore new worlds and ideas through a dedicated Schools program and a Kids and YA Day. Beloved authors Craig Silvey and Andy Griffiths will join the Festival, sharing stories that have connected with readers across the country, young and old.

Canberra's creative and business sectors continue to be supported. The Book Cow Kingston returns as the official Festival Bookseller, and partnerships with organisations such as Screen Canberra help showcase the depth of talent and innovation in our city.

Thank you to the organisers, volunteers, partners and supporters who make this event possible. And thank you to the Canberrans and visitors who continue to embrace the Canberra Writers Festival each year.

Enjoy the 2025 Canberra Writers Festival.

Andrew Barr MLA
ACT Chief Minister

Meet The Team

BOARD

Jane O'Dwyer – Chair

Gregory Andrews – Deputy Chair

Putri Handrianti – Treasurer

Allan Behm, Hannah Brown,
Sunil Badami, Frank Bongiorno,
Sally Pryor, Katherine McMahon,
Denise Cardew-Hall

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Qin Qin – Artistic Associate

Katie Puttock – Program Liaison

Kristen Zotti – Marketing & PR

Tim Duck – Production Manager

Renee King – Graphic Designer

Tadi Motsi, Audrey McCormick –
Festival Programs Team

Visabel – Festival and Volunteers
Management



@canberrawritersfestival



@cbrwritersfest

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

#cbrwritersfest

Festival passes

Pick 4 events each day and save!

Library Pass - \$100 – Select 4 standard events at the National Library of Australia (Sat/Sun only)

Parliament Pass - \$100 – Select 4 events at the Museum of Australian Democracy Old Parliament House

Portrait Pass - \$100 – Select 4 events at the National Portrait Gallery

Festival Passes are not valid for Special Events, Hyatt Hotel events or Louis Dining event.

How to book

Tickets for events at the National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia, Museum of Australian Democracy Old Parliament House, National Portrait Gallery, Festival Village, Australian National University, National Press Club, Verity Lane Market, Smith's Alternative can be booked directly through Canberra Writers Festival. For tickets to events at other venues please refer to the individual event listing in the program and on the event listing on our website.

Booking fees apply to all tickets purchased via our website, excluding free events (when purchased in an order containing only free events).

Online: www.canberrawritersfestival.com.au

Via Email: tickets@canberrawritersfestival.com.au

CONCESSION - PROOF REQUIRED

Concession prices are available for children under the age of 16, full-time students, Commonwealth Health Care Card holders, Commonwealth Seniors Card Holders and Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card holders. Please have your eligible card with you at the venue.

Please have your eTicket downloaded on your phone, or a print out of your tickets, for scanning at each session.

TICKET REFUNDS

No ticket refund or exchange will be made unless an event is cancelled.

Program information is correct at the time of printing. Please visit www.canberrawritersfestival.com.au for updates or changes to the program.

Venue Information

National Library of Australia Parkes Place W, Parkes

National Museum of Australia Lawson Crescent, Acton

Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD)

18 King George Terrace, Parkes

National Portrait Gallery of Australia King Edward Terrace, Parkes

Festival Village - Patrick White Lawns Parkes Place W, Canberra

National Press Club of Australia 16 National Circuit, Barton

The Australian National University

Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre Tangney Road, Acton

Marie Reay Teaching Centre 155 University Avenue, Canberra

Verity Lane Market 50 Northbourne Ave, Canberra

Smith's Alternative 76 Alinga St, Canberra

Hyatt Hotel Canberra 120 Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla

Louis Dining 18 National Circuit, Barton

Dendy Cinemas Canberra Canberra Centre, 148 Bunda St, Canberra



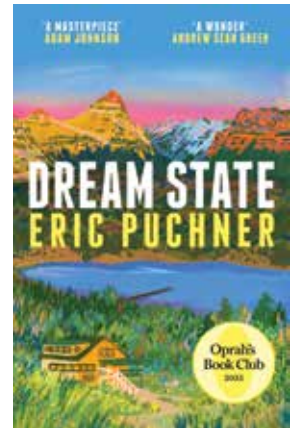
Special Events

Dream State: In Conversation with Great American Novelist - Eric Puchner!

National Library of Australia - 7 Oct @ 6pm

\$30/\$26

Join internationally acclaimed American novelist Eric Puchner for a special event celebrating his latest novel, *Dream State* - an instant *New York Times* bestseller and Oprah Book Club Pick! With Montana's breathtaking landscape as the backdrop, *Dream State* is a gripping and exquisitely told story of a love triangle, friendship, marriage, and the march of climate change. With tart humour and heart, it explores how the choices of one impulsive summer echo across fifty years and generations, captivating readers with its rich storytelling. In conversation with CWF Artistic Director Andra Putnis.



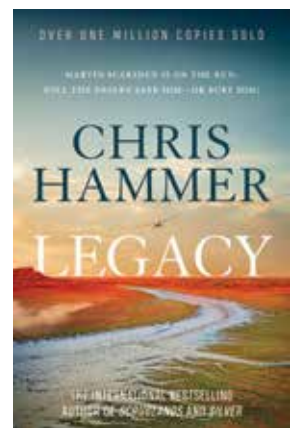
Our Own Chris Hammer

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre - 13 Oct @ 6pm

FREE

Presented in partnership with ANU Meet the Author

What happens when the detective becomes the hunted? In *Legacy*, Martin Scarsden is on the run - book launch bombed, hometown attacked and chased into the desert by those who want him dead. Chris Hammer has pushed his protagonist to the edge across *Scrublands*, *Silver*, *Trust*, and now *Legacy*, testing how far he can go. Don't miss this thrilling conversation between Chris Hammer and Michael Brissenden at a special hometown event.



Girl on Girl: Modern Misogyny Gone Global

Verity Lane Market - 17 Oct @ 6pm

\$30/\$26

What impact has reality TV, social media, porn, and the beauty industry had on women and feminism worldwide? U.K. Pulitzer-nominated journalist Sophie Gilbert explores this in *Girl on Girl: How Pop Culture Turned a Generation of Women Against Themselves*. She examines how women are shaped by beauty standards driven by the male gaze, and can be pitted against themselves and each other. Sophie joins Canberra's Virginia Haussegger, author of *Unfinished Revolution*, for a powerful conversation about feminism and the ongoing fight against sexism and misogyny.



Insiders Live with David Speers

National Press Club - 22 Oct @ 6.30pm

\$40/\$36

Insiders is unmissable television for political tragi-comics and those hooked on domestic and international developments. Let's face it – there are a few of us in Canberra that meet the description! Host David Speers returns to the Canberra Writers Festival with a panel of leading political minds to help us make sense of unfolding events here and overseas. Grab a drink and bite to eat at the National Press Club beforehand, then join us for a live edition of Australia's must-watch political program to keep your finger on the pulse.

Special Events

Opening Night: The Haunting Australia of Jane Harper

National Museum of Australia - 23 Oct @ 6.30pm

\$45/\$40

Celebrate Opening Night with international bestseller Jane Harper and her haunting new mystery, *Last One Out*. Known for capturing the ominous Australian bush in *The Dry*, *The Lost Man*, and *Force of Nature*, Jane holds a mirror to many of our deepest fears. In this latest novel, the outback heat and dust come alive. Join her in conversation with Canberra's Alex Sloan as they explore her meteoric rise, storytelling craft, and enduring fascination with the twilight bush.

With Alice Matthews, ABC Canberra, at the helm as our Master of Ceremonies we will give you a night to remember... with special guest Canberra musical legend and author, Fred Smith.



In Love with Tasmania: Heather Rose in Conversation

National Library of Australia - 24 Oct @ 7pm

\$35/\$30

Heather Rose, passionate about love, Tasmania, and captivating female characters, reaches new creative heights with *A Great Act of Love*. Heather will take us from Van Diemen's Land to the champagne vineyards of France, sharing heartfelt insights about writing through life's challenges.

The award-winning author of *Museum of Modern Love*, *Bruny*, and *Nothing Bad Ever Happens Here* joins celebrated Canberra writer Karen Viggers for a candid, warm, and compelling conversation about storytelling and resilience.



Grief and Glamour in Hollywood: In Conversation with Griffin Dunne

Verity Lane Market - 25 Oct @ 1.30pm

\$30/\$26

Sponsored by Screen Canberra

Griffin Dunne grew up in glamorous, fantastical Hollywood, with Joan Didion as an aunt and Carrie Fisher as a best friend. Surrounded by celebrities who frequented his family home - as a child, Sean Connery saved him from drowning - Dunne went on to build his own exciting career as an actor, director and producer, but tragedy struck when his sister Dominique, a rising star, was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. This event led to one of the most infamous public trials of the decade. *The Friday Afternoon Club* is a raw, gripping memoir of fame, family, and loss. Griffin joins Toby Schmitz for a revealing conversation.



Chosen Family: Garden Cocktail and Conversation with Madeleine Gray

Hyatt Hotel Canberra - 25 Oct @ 2pm

All tickets \$45

Books about friendship aren't often called love stories, but *Chosen Family* is one. Join Madeleine Gray for a heartfelt conversation about friends who adore and challenge each other through school, university, careers, and motherhood. Known for her brilliant humour in *Green Dot*, Madeleine's latest novel will make you laugh, cry, and celebrate friendship's highs and lows. Held in the historic Rose Courtyard at Hyatt Hotel Canberra, this exclusive event features Madeleine in conversation with *HerCanberra*'s Erin Cross.

Brought to you by the CWF and Hyatt Hotel Canberra



Dalton Defies Gravity: Trent Dalton in Conversation

National Library of Australia - 25 Oct @ 6.30pm

\$35/\$30

Presented in partnership with ANU Meet the Author

Australia's bestselling author of *Boy Swallows Universe*, Trent Dalton, returns with his most personal work yet, *Gravity Let Me Go*, again set in Brisbane, and about a journalist obsessed with the true-crime scoop of a lifetime. Dark, occasionally terrifying, but with wonderful moments of humour, light and Dalton-sweetness, Trent shows us again why we see ourselves in his work... could the characters be us if we'd just taken a few wrong turns? In conversation with journalist, author and book enthusiast extraordinaire, Caroline Overington.

OCTOBER 29 - NOVEMBER 2

CAPITAL FILM FESTIVAL 2025

TICKETS ON SALE OCTOBER 1

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CANBERRA

Special Events

Blood, Sweat and Glitter: Em Rusciano & Michael Lucas!

Verity Lane Market - 25 Oct @ 8pm

\$35/\$28

Chaos, relief, and comedy collide in Em Rusciano's laugh-out-loud, deeply honest memoir about living with the "diagnostic trifecta": ADHD, autism, and perimenopause. It's the kind of story that'll have you howling with laughter one minute, sobbing with your mates the next. Em - writer, singer, podcaster, comic - brings her signature brilliance, joined by her hilarious partner-in-crime, award-winning screenwriter Michael Lucas (*Offspring*, *Rosehaven*, *The Newsreader*). Expect raw truths, big laughs, and unforgettable moments. An unmissable evening, hosted by *HerCanberra*'s Emma Macdonald.



Caught in Conflict - Peter Greste, Cheng Lei & John Lyons

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre - 26 Oct @ 12pm

\$30/\$26

Reporting from hostile environments is increasingly dangerous, especially under regimes that suppress free speech. In this powerful conversation, panellists Peter Greste, Cheng Lei, and John Lyons share their unique experiences. Peter Greste in *The Correspondent*, recounts reporting from war zones before being imprisoned in Egypt for 400 days. Cheng Lei, author of *A Memoir of Freedom*, was falsely charged with espionage and discovered the extent of China's state security paranoia and powers to quash dissent through her three years' imprisonment in China. John Lyons, in *A Bunker in Kyiv*, sheltered alongside Ukrainians as they resisted the first onslaughts of the Russian military. Hosted by journalist Karen Middleton, this discussion explores the growing threat to media freedom.

John Lyons appearing live from the US.

One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This: Omar El Akkad and Peter Greste

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre - 26 Oct @ 2.30pm

\$35/\$28

Omar El Akkad's memoir *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This* is a powerful, heartfelt plea from a man who lost faith with the promise of America. This book has received international acclaim for exposing Western cowardice in the face of the destruction of Gaza. Beyond political disillusionment, it's a deeply personal exploration of loss and hope, shaped by his experiences growing up in Egypt and Qatar, then moving to the West. Omar joins us in Canberra for a compelling conversation with author, former journalist and media freedom advocate Peter Greste. This is an unmissable conversation.

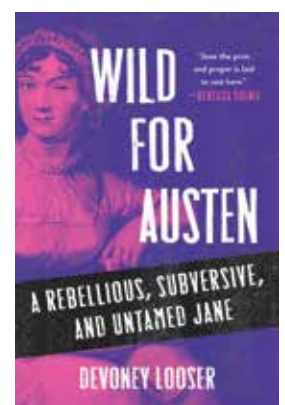


All Things Austen! Jane Austen Anniversary Special

National Library of Australia - 26 Oct @ 3pm

\$30/\$26

Celebrate all things Austen at this major event! Over 200 years after Jane Austen's works first appeared, her insights on life, love, and society remain timeless. Join popular *Secret Life of Books* podcasters Sophie Gee and Jonty Claypole as they bring together an international panel featuring *Wild for Austen* author Devoney Looser (from the USA), Emily Maguire (*Rapture*), and Jane Austen Society of Australia president Susannah Fullerton. Join the community, and share your love - because, as Mr. Darcy says, "My feelings will not be repressed!"



Friday 24 October



Jana Wendt: The Stories Around Us

Fri 24 Oct - High Tea
Hyatt Hotel Canberra - 11am

All tickets \$89 – Bookings via Hyatt

Can fiction reveal deeper truths than journalism? Join Australian media living legend and presenter Jana Wendt as she explores this question. With a celebrated three-decade journalism career, Jana now turns to fiction in her whimsical and witty collection, *The Far Side of the Moon and Other Stories*. Discover how she transitioned from investigative reporting to fiction storytelling. In conversation with Canberra's Alex Sloan over a delightful three-tiered High Tea in the Centenary Ballroom at Hyatt Hotel Canberra.

Brought to you by the CWF and Hyatt Hotel Canberra.

ACT Book of the Year Awards

National Library of Australia - 24 Oct @ 2.30pm
FREE

The ACT Book of the Year Awards celebrate literary excellence and recognises the outstanding achievements of ACT authors. The afternoon will commence with a panel discussion featuring the shortlisted authors offering insights into their creative processes and provide a deeper appreciation of Canberra's literary talent. Following the panel discussion Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Michael Pettersson MLA will announce the recipient of the 2025 ACT Book of the Year.

#cbrwritersfest

Art and Words: Celebrating Literature & Contemporary Artists

National Portrait Gallery - Terrace - 5.30pm

\$28/\$25

Words, images and performances all provide windows into our world. Our panellists - Gail Jones, Kate Grenville, and Quentin Sprague - bring celebrated and diverse experiences in literature, film and visual art. Gail began as a painter before becoming an acclaimed author. Kate started in film and has seen her iconic Australian books adapted for stage and screen. Quentin writes exquisitely about contemporary art. Moderated by Kim Mahood, they explore how words and images shape understanding - and what each can do that the other cannot.



Mervyn Bishop in Black, White and Colour

National Portrait Gallery - Theatre - 6pm

\$28/\$25

The iconic image of Gough Whitlam pouring earth into Vincent Lingiari's hands is etched in Australia's memory - but few know the story of the man behind the lens: Mervyn Bishop, the nation's first Indigenous professional newspaper and government photographer. *Black, White + Colour*, a new illustrated biography by Tim Dobbyn, shares Mervyn's remarkable journey. Join Mervyn and Tim, in conversation with Professor Brenda L. Croft, to explore Mervyn's life, career, and how he helped Australia see itself more clearly.



Guts: In Conversation with Melissa Leong

Louis Dining Hotel Realm - 6.30pm

\$140 – Includes three course meal.

Bookings via Louis Dining

Join Melissa Leong - *MasterChef Australia*'s first female judge - for an unflinchingly honest conversation about her memoir *Guts: A Memoir of Food, Failure and Taking Impossible Chances*. Revealing racism, mental health pressures and the darker sides of the hospitality industry, Melissa shares her journey with raw insight, wit and humour. There's food, too - delicious, joyful, and healing. In conversation with *HerCanberra* founder, Amanda Whitley, Melissa will inspire you to take bold chances and create a life that's truly your own.

Supported by HerCanberra.

In Love with Tasmania: Special Event Heather Rose in Conversation

National Library of
Australia
24 Oct @ 7pm

\$35/\$30

See Special Events listing on page 6.



Saturday 25 October



Desperately Seeking Stoicism: In Conversation with Brigid Delaney

Theatre - 11.30am

\$28/\$25

How do we get through tough times? Brigid Delaney, bestselling author of *Reasons Not to Worry* and *Wellmania*, returns with a masterclass on applying stoic philosophy to everyday life. In her new novel *The Seeker and the Sage*, a traumatised journalist investigates a mysterious town said to hold the secret to true happiness. What lessons will emerge? Brigid joins Kate Mildenhall in conversation for a lively, thoughtful - and no doubt funny - exploration of resilience, wisdom, and the power of perspective.

What Happened in the Outback? Garry Disher & Gail Jones in Conversation

Theatre - 10am

\$28/\$25

Join two of Australia's most acclaimed writers, Gail Jones (*The Name of the Sister*) and Garry Disher (*Mischance Creek*), as they delve into the power of the outback with its landscapes and unsettled complexity. With women missing, desperate searches, and police doing their best - stories of what has happened multiply. Moderated by *The Garret's* Astrid Edwards.

End of Days or Start of Something New?

Level 4 - 10.30am

\$28/\$25

Today we bear witness to the end of many things past generations took for granted. Two authors reveal what it means to stay truly human and explore new states of being as our world tilts and teeters on the edge. Josephine Rowe's *Little World* reflects on existence through a saint's consciousness after death, while Cadance Bell's *Letters to Our Robot Son* imagines life beyond humanity. Together, they reveal what we risk losing - and gaining - at the end of our old world. Moderated by local author Kayla Wilson.



Reckoning

Level 4- 12pm

\$28/\$25

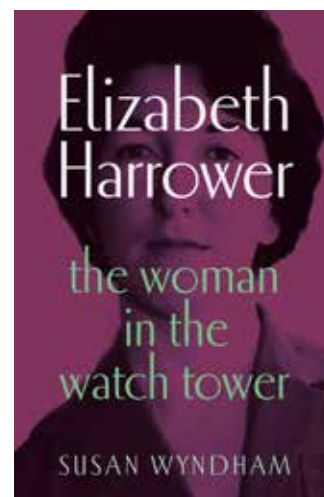
Kate Grenville's ancestors were 'the sharp edge of the moving blade' of colonisation through the Hawkesbury region - the subject of her bestseller *The Secret River*. Now, she reflects on the reckoning that comes with truly confronting the past and her family story in *Unsettled: A Journey Through Time and Place*. She's joined by Paul Daley, whose novel *The Leap* examines fear and violence in a frontier town. Two years after the Voice referendum, this timely conversation is about non-Indigenous Australians doing the work and personally reckoning with the past.

Some of My Favourite Books

Theatre - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

Join a brilliant panel of authors as they share the books that sparked their love of writing - and the ones they return to for inspiration. Trent Dalton (*Gravity Let Me Go*), Heather Rose (*A Great Act of Love*) and Garry Disher (*Hirsch* and *Peninsula Crimes* series) will reveal the books they want to shout to the rooftops and celebrate. Hosted by Kate Evans and Cassie McCullagh for *The Bookshelf*, this lively session is also a chance to discuss the books put forward for ABC Radio National's Top 100 Books of the 21st Century.



Finding Elizabeth Harrower

Level 4 - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

Literary biography offers a window into the life behind the work, and Susan Wyndham's *Elizabeth Harrower: The Woman in the Watch Tower* does just that. Harrower, highly regarded for her brilliant psychological fiction, abruptly stopped writing in the 1970s, becoming a mystery in Australian literature. Why did she stop? What role did her famous circle of friends play? And why is her work being rediscovered now? Join author and journalist Susan Wyndham in conversation with Associate Professor of English Julieanne Lamond, to explore these questions.

canberrawritersfestival.com.au



Legend, Re-Imagined: The Bright Sword

Theatre - 3pm

\$28/\$25

Lev Grossman's *The Bright Sword* is a bold, exhilarating reimagining of the King Arthur legend - hailed as one of the best books of 2024 by *The New York Times*, *NPR*, *Time*, and more. When Collum, a young man in stolen armour, seeks glory at the Round Table, he finds not grandeur but chaos. In a major festival coup, Grossman joins us to explore why the allure of Camelot still shines brightly, discuss his wider work, and tease at what's next. Hosted by *Books+Publishing's* Kate Cuthbert - unmissable for fantasy fans.

Wellness & Cure

Level 4 - 3pm

\$28/\$25

Brigid Delaney is no stranger to the search for wellness. Her memoir *Wellmania* became a Netflix hit, blending sharp humour with a deeper quest for meaning - a journey she continued in *Reasons Not to Worry* and now with *The Seeker and the Sage*. In *Cure*, Katherine Brabon offers a moving exploration of pain, faith and love, following a mother and daughter's shared experience of chronic illness. Moderated by local author Susannah Begbie, this conversation delves into the emotional heart of the pursuit of healing.

#cbrwritersfest



Unlocking Place: From Iceland to the American SouthWest

Hannah Kent and Madeleine Watts in Conversation

Theatre - 4.30pm

\$28/\$25

What does it mean to truly know a place as a writer? Hannah Kent's deep connection to Iceland and the story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir began in her teens and shaped her haunting work *Always Home, Always Homesick*. In *Elegy, Southwest*, Madeleine Watts explores love and landscape amid wildfire and drought. Together, these authors reflect on place, memory, and meaning. Join them in conversation with local author Theodore Ell (*Lebanon Days*) as they discuss the art of unlocking place through storytelling.

Lonely, Sacred, Desperate and Divine

Level 4 - 4.30pm

\$28/\$25

Something powerful happens when beautiful writers explore the sacred through the lens of human desire and vulnerability. In *Little World*, Josephine Rowe follows a girl saint from 1950s north-west Australia to pandemic-era Victoria, blending the spiritual with the everyday. Emily Maguire's *Rapture* stunned readers with its bold tale of a medieval girl who rises to become Pope, imagining the extraordinary path that could have made it possible. Together, these authors illuminate the divine in the deeply human. Moderated by local author Tabitha Carvan.



The Long Arc: Culture, Craft and Creative Power in Indian Australian Stories

Level 4 - 6pm

\$25/\$20

What fuels the creative power behind stories that challenge, move and engage us on screen? How do Indian Australian creatives navigate the tensions between cultural heritage and mainstream storytelling, creating narratives that resonate both within their communities and beyond?

Award-winning filmmaker and film entrepreneur Anupam Sharma (*UnIndian*), creator, writer and executive producer Mithila Gupta (*Four Years Later, Desi Downunder*), and comedian, writer and actor Urvi Majumdar (*Urvi Went to an All Girls School*) reflect on these questions, and the joy, discipline, and cultural power of bringing stories to the screen.

This session invites you behind the scenes, exploring the breakthroughs and long arc of past and present into the future of Australian screen culture.

Event supported by the High Commission of India in Australia and Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre.

Dalton Defies Gravity: Trent Dalton in Conversation

National Library of Australia - 25 Oct @ 6.30pm

\$35/\$30

See Special Events listing on page 7.

Saturday 25 October

She Shapes History Quest

9.30am and 12.30pm

\$75 (1 Adult & 1 Child) - \$25 per additional child

A hidden wartime communications bunker. A secret message carved into a statue. A building without a loo for the women who worked there. You'll find them all on this special 90-minute *She Shapes History* tour made just for curious kids. Join authors Eleri Harris and Sita Sargeant as they uncover the bold and brilliant women who shaped Australian politics. This interactive 1km adventure through and around Old Parliament House brings history to life. Along the way, kids will meet ten women who stood up, spoke out, and sparked change, even when the odds were stacked against them.

Recommended for ages 8–12.

Wake Up! The Essay as Alarm Clock

Senate - 10am

\$28/\$25

A powerful and timely essay can shift perspectives and wake us up. In this session, Esther Anatolitis - editor of *Essays That Changed Australia* - highlights standout pieces from decades of *Meanjin* and we celebrate the impact *The Monthly* and *Quarterly Essay* both have on Australia's political, social, and cultural life. Joining Esther are award-winning journalist Marian Wilkinson (*On profit vs. planet*) and long-time authority on the art of the essay Don Watson (*High Noon, Enemy Within*). Moderated by Michael Williams, editor of *The Monthly*.

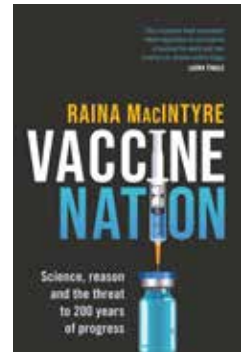
Method or Madness?

Senate - 11.30am

\$28/\$25

How can science push back against society's growing fear, and yet complacency? What are the ramifications of growing vaccine denial? Elizabeth Finkel (*Prove It*) and Raina MacIntyre (*Vaccine Nation*) argue that defending science and reason is essential for our survival. In conversation with ABC news editor Tracey Kirkland (*Pandemia*), they explore why the scientific method must be protected. Join them for this urgent discussion on the future of scientific progress.

Support by Inspiring Australia ACT

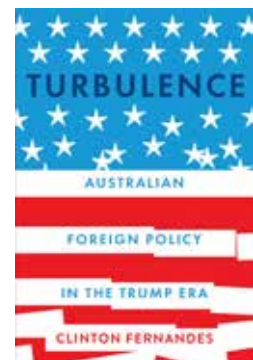


Diplomats and Disasters: Embassies on the Front Line

Representatives - 10.30am

\$28/\$25

The Australian Embassy is a place of high policy, support and refuge - and a frontline post in times of crisis. Career diplomats Lachlan Strahan (*The Curious Diplomat*) and Grant Dooley (*Bomb Season in Jakarta*) reveal what it means to serve abroad during global upheaval. From embassy bombings to the Boxing Day tsunami, Dooley was there. Strahan, a key voice on India, China, the Korean Peninsula and South Pacific, brings deep experience and knowledge. In conversation with journalist Karen Middleton, they show why our diplomatic corps matters now more than ever.

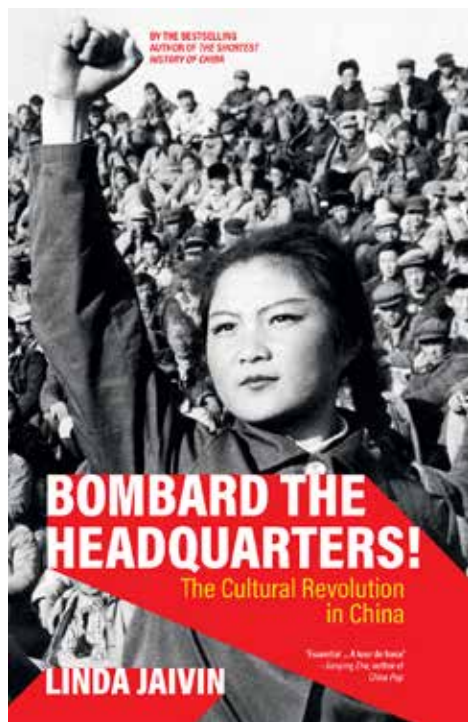


The USA, Trump & Friends

Representatives - 12pm

\$28/\$25

What kind of political and economic system enabled Donald Trump to rise - again? Are we in uncharted waters, or does history hold the clues? Join an expert panel as they unpack America's past and present: Don Watson (*High Noon, Enemy Within* and upcoming *The Shortest History of the United States of America*), Professor Amin Saikal (*How to Lose a War: The Story of America's Intervention in Afghanistan*), and Clinton Fernandes (*Turbulence: Australian Foreign Policy in the Trump Era*), with Allan Behm moderating. Together, they explore U.S. foreign policy, political chaos, and what it all means for the world today.



Stalin, Mao...Putin, Xi, Trump? The March of Authoritarian History

Representatives - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

The legacies of Stalin and Mao still echo today. What do their dictatorships reveal about the dangers of unchecked power? Linda Jaivin (*Bombard the Headquarters!*) and Sheila Fitzpatrick (*The Death of Stalin, Lost Souls*) delve into how authoritarian rule reshapes leaders, nations, and lives. As global tensions rise, their insights are more urgent than ever. Join them as they explore these chapters - and the critical lessons they hold for navigating the threats of our present era. Moderated by Kyle Wilson, Visiting Fellow at the ANU Centre for European Studies.

Dispatch from the Diplomat

Representatives - 3pm

\$28/\$25

Join Lachlan Strahan, the always-curious diplomat, as he launches his memoir, reflecting on 30 years on the frontlines of foreign affairs. From Germany to China to Pyongyang and on to India and the Solomon Islands, Strahan offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes of diplomacy - where split-second decisions can shape international outcomes. Navigating shifting governments and political chaos, he worked to present Australia's voice on the world stage. A must-see session for anyone curious about foreign policy, leadership, and Australia's role in global affairs. Moderated by journalist and Professor at the Australian Studies Institute, Mark Kenny.



Profit vs. Planet vs. Human

Senate - 2pm

\$28/\$25

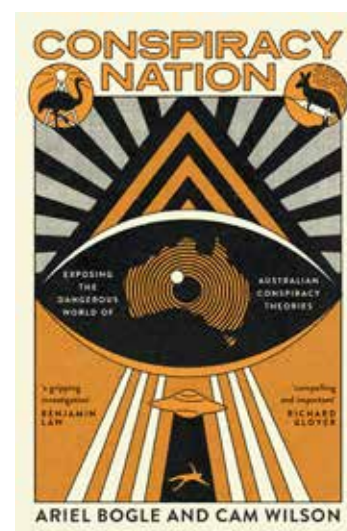
Is corporate profit fundamentally at odds with a healthy planet? Senator David Pocock explores this urgent question with award-winning journalist Marian Wilkinson, author of *On profit vs. planet*. They're joined by Richard King (*Brave New Wild*), who asks whether our efforts to save nature through technology might instead destroy it - and us.

Together, they examine a world on the brink, where the choices we make now will shape the future of our society, our species, and the Earth itself.

Moderated by Michael Williams, editor of *The Monthly*.

Supported by Inspiring Australia ACT

#cbrwritersfest



Conspiracy vs. Trust

Senate - 3.30pm

\$28/\$25

Nanochips in vaccines. 5G causing COVID. Port Arthur denialism. Why are conspiracy theories so compelling - and dangerous? In *Conspiracy Nation*, journalists Cam Wilson and Ariel Bogle reveal how Australian conspiracy movements have taken root in a global web of misinformation. Joined by *Age of Doubt* editors Tracey Kirkland and Gavin Fang, they explore why we're living in an age ripe with mistrust and manipulation. This vital session asks: how did we get here - and how do we begin to rebuild trust?

Saturday 25 October



Passion, Food, Love: Helly Raichura's Story

Liangis Theatre - 10am

\$28/\$25

Helly Raichura, beloved MasterChef contestant and founder of Melbourne's Enter Via Laundry, has created a unique cookbook, *The Food of Bharat*. It explores India's culinary history, blending rich historical insights with recipes from its regions. Once a HR advisor, Helly left her job to pursue cooking, hosting intimate dinners at home. Hear how passionate she is about creating shared meals that journey through time and place. Join Helly and Susan Helyar, host of Ginsights Author Talks, for a delicious discussion about food, passion and multicultural Australia's culinary future.

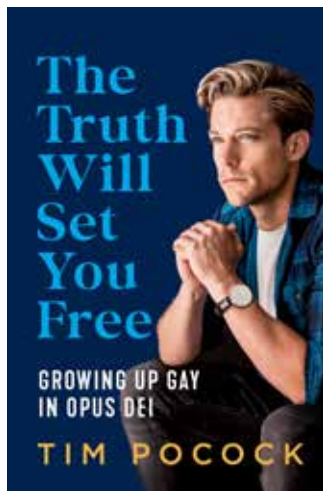
Supported by the High Commission of India in Australia and Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre.

Stories of Birth & Death

Terrace Room - 10.30am

\$28/\$25

Join us for a heartfelt conversation on community, faith, and companionship at life's key gateways - birth and death, and an honouring of those who support people through these transitions. Katia Ariel, author of *The Swift Dark Tide* and *Ferryman*, and Oceane Campbell, memoirist of *Labour of Love* and midwifery advocate, explore how respecting individual identities, values, and spiritual traditions brings dignity and care during these pivotal moments. The event is moderated by journalist Sally Pryor.

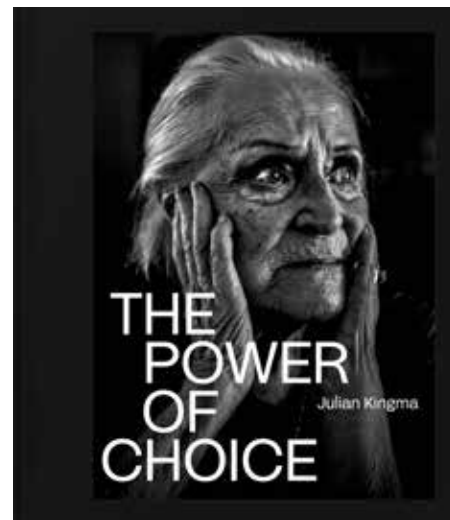


Growing Up Gay in Opus Dei

Liangis Theatre - 11.30am

\$28/\$25

Tim Pocock, known for his roles in Hollywood's *X-Men* and the much-loved *Dance Academy*, grew up in a strict Catholic family. Attending a school linked to Opus Dei, he feared revealing his sexuality and so played the role of a devoted, straight son. His journey from this constricted life to Hollywood stardom and beyond is a powerful story of self-discovery. Hear Tim discuss his memoir, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, in conversation with novelist, playwright and librettist Nigel Featherstone.



The Power of Choice

Terrace Room - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

At life's end, we can feel powerless in the face of failing bodies, pain and the path ahead. For some, Voluntary Assisted Dying can restore a measure of control over how we leave this world. Julian Kingma's photobook, featuring essays by Andrew Denton and Richard Flanagan, offers compassion for those choosing their own path. With the ACT scheme starting soon, this discussion highlights the importance of choice in dying with dignity. Journalist Caroline Overington, who has written powerfully about Julian's work, joins him in conversation.

Bob Brown: Stand Up!

In conversation with Senator Sarah Hanson-Young

Terrace Room - 12pm

\$28/\$25

For fifty years, Bob Brown has led environmental protection, politics and collective action in Australia, inspiring generations and preserving vast wilderness areas. In his memoir *Defiance*, he emphasises the urgent need to fight for environmental and land justice. Join Bob in conversation with Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young as they discuss the challenges facing nature's defenders, what drives Bob's relentless commitment and why it's more important than ever to speak up and fight for our precious Earth.

canberrawritersfestival.com.au

Agnes Magnúsdóttir: Muse, Ghost, Obsession?

Liangis Theatre - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

Hannah Kent's latest book *Always Home, Always Homesick* reveals how as a young woman she discovered the story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir and it changed her life. Since then, Agnes has worked through Hannah in mysterious ways – haunting her as muse, ghost, obsession? Join Hannah as she reflects on how Agnes has been with her in different forms and opened her mind to the inexplicable magic of history and connection across time. In conversation with writer, critic and former CWF Artistic Director, Beejay Silcox.

The Cults Around Us

Liangis Theatre - 3pm

\$28/\$25

Cults with extreme beliefs operate quietly around us. Liz Cameron was approached in Civic and ultimately drawn into a South Korean cult led by a serial assaulter. Hollywood star Tim Pocock grew up in the orbit of Opus Dei, fearing his sexuality and facing conversion therapy. In *Cult Bride* and *The Truth Will Set You Free*, they share harrowing yet uplifting journeys to reclaim their true selves. Moderated by author and journalist Ginger Gorman, this essential session explores cult dynamics and personal resilience.

Determination, Love and Dementia

Terrace Room - 3.30pm

\$28/\$25

Spiri Tsintziras' *Twelve Golden Gifts* illuminates a path for those caring for a loved one with dementia. It is a heartfelt tribute to her mother Chrisoula, whose generosity, wit, and cooking supported her family for decades. Chrisoula's twelve golden gifts then helped her children Spiri and Dennis in care and grief. Spiri now shares these gifts with us in a moving session for anyone affected by dementia. Expect tears, solace, and open hearts. Moderated by writer and poet Lucy Alexander.

Words that Shine

Brought to you by the Canberra Writers Festival and That Poetry Thing

2.30pm

All Tickets \$15

Join us for an intimate yet lively afternoon filled with the power and passion of poetry and spoken word. On stage, we will bring some of Australia and New Zealand's most accomplished stars together with much acclaimed poets and spoken word artists from our region. This will be a searing but joyous event where POETRY and SLAM are held on high, we give a warm welcome to our overseas and interstate poet champions and celebrate the wonderful poetry scene of our town.

SMUT!

9.30pm

All Tickets \$15

Before the *Cosmopolitan* sealed section and before *Dolly Doctor* there were the *Penthouse* letters: naughty notes sent in by readers to Australia's most popular men's softcore porn magazine. The stories were almost all written by men, starring impossibly willing, instantly aroused and available women. But what if we evolve these letters? What if *Penthouse* existed in 2025? In an age of sex-positivity, OnlyFans and dating apps? What kind of fantasy stories would be submitted, and by whom? In this late-night event, hosted by unruly cabaret and comedy queen Venus Mantrap, we'll challenge interstate and local writers to pen a modern ending to real *Penthouse* letters published in the 1980s. With performances and quick flirty writing opportunities, we'll invite the audience into a more enlightened bed too. Designed for those who love the inappropriate (and stay up way past bedtime), this festival event is definitely SMUTton dressed up as lamb.

#cbrwritersfest

What Do Women Want?

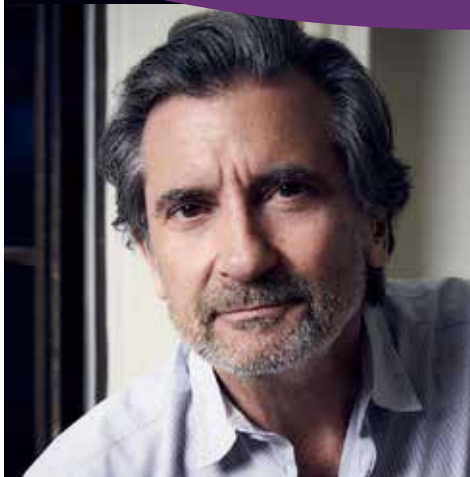
7pm

All Tickets \$15

Pleasure should be a simple thing but a lot of the time – it isn't! Perhaps the plot of sweet romance and erotic fiction books contain part of the answer? Cue the handsome prince, male best friend, girl next door, or something else altogether... whatever you fancy! Join Rachael Johns (Queen of Aussie Romance), Linda Jaivin (erotic novelist from the get-go) and superstar locals, Alyx Gorman (*All Women Want*) and Freya Marske (author of queer romantic fantasy) as they talk romance, fantasy and sex! This is going to be fun... Moderated by Books+Publishing's Kate Cuthbert.



Saturday 25 October



Grief and Glamour in Hollywood: In Conversation with Griffin Dunne

Louie Louie - 1.30pm

\$30/\$26

Sponsored by Screen Canberra

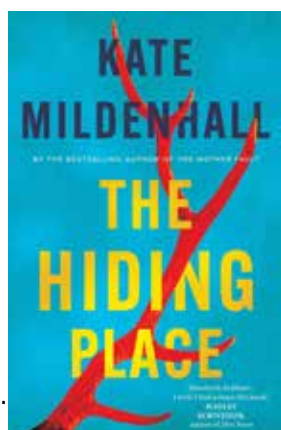
Griffin Dunne grew up in glamorous, fantastical Hollywood, with Joan Didion as an aunt and Carrie Fisher as a best friend. Surrounded by celebrities who frequented his family home - as a child, Sean Connery saved him from drowning - Dunne went on to build his own exciting career as an actor, director and producer, but tragedy struck when his sister Dominique, a rising star, was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. This event led to one of the most infamous public trials of the decade. *The Friday Afternoon Club* is a raw, gripping memoir of fame, family, and loss. Griffin joins actor, playwright and author Toby Schmitz for a revealing conversation.

Bolthole or Hellhole?

Juliet - 2pm

\$28/\$25

These three gripping novels explore properties, retreats, and eco-communities meant to offer escape - until everything unravels. In *The Hiding Place*, Kate Mildenhall delivers a feral, fast-paced thriller of fractured friendships. Shelley Burr's *Vanish* reveals dark secrets buried in rural fields, while Jessica Mansour-Nahra's *The Farm* uncovers psychological terror in a supposed sanctuary. Wellness turns to menace in these tales of escape gone wrong. Join writer, editor and publisher Alice Grundy for a thrilling conversation about bush boltholes, breakdowns - and bodies. Still keen to get away?



Feminist Fightback!

Louie Louie - 3.30pm

\$28/\$25

Across the world, women are witnessing a backlash against decades of feminist progress - rising misogyny, domestic violence, and attacks on reproductive rights. This powerful, necessary conversation explores Australia's radical women's liberation history, the ongoing crisis of gendered violence, and issues a fierce call to action. Above all, it's a celebration of women and girls. Join Virginia Haussegger, Jess Hill, and Maxine Beneba Clarke for an honest, urgent discussion - with space for your questions and voices to be heard. The revolution isn't over.

Moderated by Canberra author, artist and performance poet, Jacqui Malins.



Let's Be Honest...

Louie Louie - 6pm

\$28/\$25

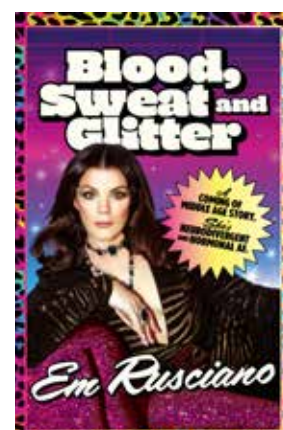
Can rage, wit, and insight collide? Absolutely. Join Lucinda Price (aka Froomes), Madison Griffiths, and Kate Mildenhall for a wild, fearless dive into young womanhood - covering beauty, botox, pop culture, and the darker truths of power, coercion and campus abuse. Lucinda's hilarious debut *All I Ever Wanted Was To Be Hot* is raw and honest, and Madison's *Sweet Nothings* deftly explores student-professor entanglements. Moderated by *The Hiding Place* author Kate Mildenhall, this conversation uses humour as sharp protest - and survival.

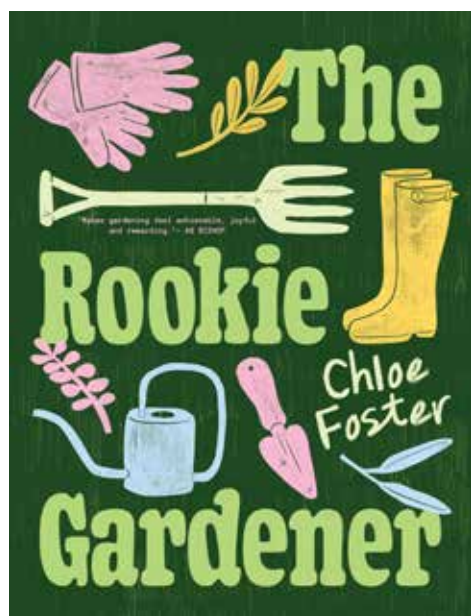
Blood, Sweat and Glitter: Em Rusciano & Michael Lucas!

Louie Louie - 8pm

\$35/\$28

See Special Events for information, page 8.





Gardening Across the Generations

Patrick White Terrace - 10am

\$25/\$20

Gardening connects us to the land, our food, and each other.

Join Anna Matilda, Chloe Foster and Judy Friedlander as they explore how gardening is shared across generations, communities and ecosystems.

This session is for beginners through to experienced permaculture designers, as we learn from each other and build thriving pollinator-friendly bio-diverse homes and balconies.

Moderated by ABC Canberra TV News anchor, journalist and long-time garden lover, Adrienne Francis.

Plus, ABC Canberra Saturday Breakfast with Emma Bickley and gardening expert Graham 'Willow' Wilson will broadcast live from 8.30am and answer your gardening questions.

Come on down!

All Ages Event



Nature is Human

Patrick White Terrace - 11.30am

\$25/\$20

Our natural world is in crisis - and if it goes, we go too. This powerful panel will explore how we can reconnect with nature and take meaningful action. Jane Rawson and Natalie Kyriacou will guide us through forests to oceans, deserts to mountains, and show us how we can celebrate the extraordinary around us. Darren Rix, a Gunditjmarra-GunaiKurnai man with Ngarigo bloodlines, shares First Nations connection to Country and the immense value of learning from elders about place and history. Moderated by Walkley Award-winning journalist Nicole Hasham, this is an urgent and uplifting session of reflection and renewal.

Support by Inspiring Australia ACT



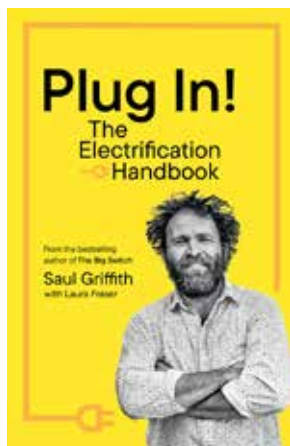
Plug In!

Patrick White Terrace - 1pm

\$25/\$20

Saul Griffith, Australia's leading voice on renewable energy, guides you step by step through electrifying your life in this practical workshop. From heating your home and keeping your shower hot to sourcing clean power and travelling comfortably without gas or coal, Saul breaks it down simply. If switching to renewable energy feels overwhelming, this session will clear the path. Based on his new handbook and moderated by motoring journalist and co-founder of EV Central Stephen Corby, it's an empowering conversation for anyone ready to make the change.

Support by Inspiring Australia ACT



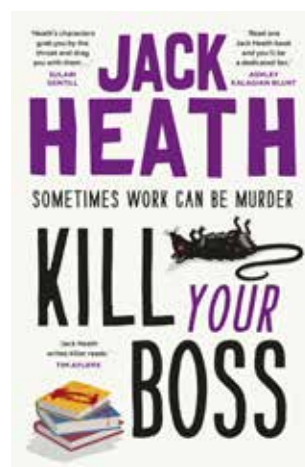
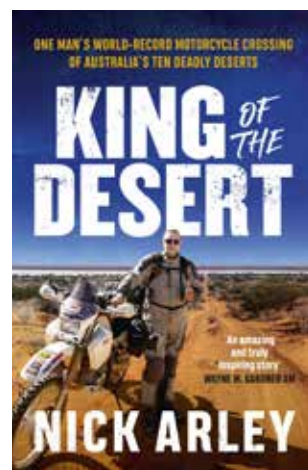
Endurance and the Need for Speed: A Motorcycling Life

Patrick White Terrace - 2.30pm

\$25/\$20

Nick Arley, King of the Desert is a Canberra public servant turned outback epic endurance hero, and Guinness World Record holder!

Motorcycling inspired him to grab life by the handlebars and RIDE IT! This session is for those that love wheels, the open road and stories of people persevering until they achieve their dreams. Moderated by Stephen Corby, Australia's most revered motoring journalist and former editor of *Top Gear* and *Wheels*.



What is it with Canberra and Crime?

Patrick White Terrace - 4pm

\$25/\$20

Crime is a popular genre, but Canberra boasts more crime writers per capita than other states - why is this? Representing 'Canberra Crime' are Michael Brissenden (*The Dust*), Jack Heath (*Kill Your Boss*), and Alison Booth (*Death at Booroomba*). They'll discuss their latest works, their passion for the genre, and how it lets them explore history, human relationships and outback town dynamics. Moderated by SA crime writer Lainie Anderson.

Sunday 26 October

Salvaging the Earth?

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre
Cinema 11am

\$28/\$25

Omar El Akkad joins the Festival following the release of his powerful memoir *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*. But he first gained acclaim with *American War*, a bestseller set during a climate-driven U.S. civil war in 2074. Jennifer Mills' *Salvage* follows two sisters - one on Earth, the other in space - after ecological collapse. In *Elegy, Southwest*, Madeleine Watts traces a young couple's journey along the dying Colorado River. Through speculative fiction, these authors explore love and survival amid environmental crisis. Moderated by *The Garret's* Astrid Edwards, this conversation examines how we can preserve our humanity in a changing world.

Caught in Conflict - Peter Greste, Cheng Lei & John Lyons

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre -
12pm

\$30/\$26

Reporting from hostile environments is increasingly dangerous, especially under regimes that suppress free speech. In this powerful conversation, panellists Peter Greste, Cheng Lei, and John Lyons share their unique experiences. In *The Correspondent*, Peter Greste recounts reporting from war zones before being imprisoned in Egypt for 400 days. Cheng Lei, author of *A Memoir of Freedom*, was falsely charged with espionage, and discovered the extent of China's state security paranoia and powers to quash dissent through her three years' imprisonment in China. John Lyons, in *A Bunker in Kyiv*, sheltered alongside Ukrainians as they resisted the first onslaughts of the Russian military. Hosted by journalist and author Karen Middleton, this discussion explores the growing threat to media freedom.

John Lyons appearing live from the US.



Lay the World Bare

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre

Cinema 12.30pm

\$28/\$25

Storytelling helps us truly see the world - from Colombo to Tehran to Soweto. Shankari Chandran, author of *Chai Time in Cinnamon Gardens*, returns with *Unfinished Business*, a gripping political thriller set in the tense streets of Sri Lanka's capital. In *Desolation*, Hossein Asgari explores grief and resilience through a man's loss during the violence of 1980s Iran. Irma Gold's *Shift* portrays a family's love and struggle in one of South Africa's most famous and notorious townships. In conversation with Nicole Abadee, these authors will show how place shapes character, and how story is rooted in the landscapes we call home.

One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This:

Omar El Akkad and Peter Greste

ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre -
2.30pm

\$35/\$28

Omar El Akkad's memoir *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This* is a powerful, heartfelt plea from a man who has lost faith in the promise of America. The book has received international acclaim for exposing Western cowardice in the face of the destruction of Gaza. Beyond political disillusionment, it's a deeply personal exploration of loss and hope, shaped by his experiences growing up in Egypt and Qatar, then moving to the West. Omar joins us in Canberra for a compelling conversation with author, former journalist and media freedom advocate Peter Greste. This is an unmissable conversation.



Our Worlds, Our Way

Theatre - 10am

\$28/\$25

Join this exciting First Nations panel including Evelyn Araluen, Jasmin McCaughey and Lisa Fuller to explore how culture and Country influence each author's writing. Spanning poetry, YA and children's novels, how do Indigenous worldviews emerge? As First Nations writing and publishing thrives in Australia, this event offers a unique chance to look across genres and celebrate creativity and connection. Moderated by Ballardong Noongar educator and writer Casey Mulder, co-curator of *Rivers Flow*.

Policewoman Kate Cocks Turned Fiction

Level 4 - 10.30am

\$28/\$25

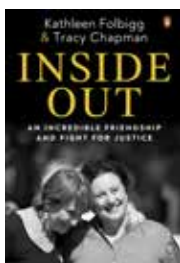
Readers loved discovering pioneering policewoman Kate Cocks in *The Death of Dora Black*. Unmarried, aged 40, she was the first policewoman in the British Empire to earn equal pay and hold the same powers of arrest as male officers. Now, Lainie Anderson brings her back in *Murder on North Terrace*, blending Cocks' real-life feats - including forcing abusive husbands to repent and using jujitsu - into gripping crime fiction. Adelaide has never been more thrilling! Lainie joins Susan Wyndham, writer and former *Sydney Morning Herald* literary editor, for a lively conversation.

Kathleen Folbigg's Story: Friendship & Fight for Justice

Theatre - 11.30am

\$28/\$25

In 2003, Kathleen Folbigg was convicted of murdering her four babies and spent 20 years in prison. Her childhood friend, Tracy Chapman, fiercely believed in her innocence and fought tirelessly for justice. New evidence and medical advances led to Kathleen's release, pardon and exoneration. *Inside Out* tells their decades-long story of friendship and determination. Join Kathleen and Tracy to hear their inspiring journey and ongoing struggle, moderated by Canberra's Alex Sloan.



Great Classics of Power, Politics and Passion: A Very Canberra Conversation

Level 4 - 12pm

\$28/\$25

Sophie Gee and Jonty Claypole of the *Secret Life of Books* podcast love igniting new insights into some of the greatest classics and authors of all time. Join them in our national capital for a brilliant discussion of mighty works and as they draw inspiration from the Canberra Writers Festival theme: Power, Politics, Passion. There's no doubt at the end you'll see some of these works differently... and perhaps gain further insight into the timeless instincts and plots that sit at the heart of our capital too.

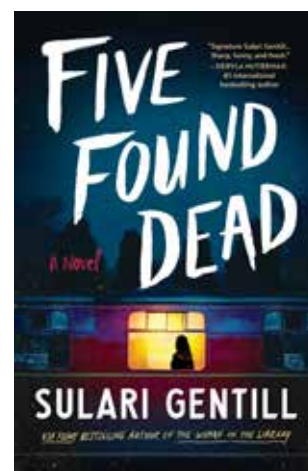


Pink Ink: The Lucky Sisters? In Conversation with Rachael Johns

Theatre - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

Rachael Johns, one of Australia's most beloved authors of warm, witty women's fiction and romance, joins us from Western Australia to discuss her latest novel, *The Lucky Sisters*, and the power of pink ink! A passionate advocate for the vibrant community of contemporary women's fiction and romance lovers, Rachael promises a feel-good session of fun, with the warmth of an amazing hug. She'll be joined by Emma Grey, author of *Pictures of You*, nominated as People Magazine's Best Book of November 2024.



Murder, Mayhem, Manners: Classic Mystery with a Twist

Level 4 - 2pm

\$28/\$25

Set 100 years apart but connected by the glamour of the Gilded Age, *Five Found Dead* and *The Empress Murders* reinvent classic murder mysteries. Themes of class, empire, privilege and wealth collide as bodies pile up. With sharp, rapid-fire dialogue, Toby Schmitz and Sulari Gentill take you on thrilling journeys aboard an Atlantic cruise and the Orient Express, where characters race to catch the killer and save themselves. Moderated by Canberra author Susannah Begbie.

All Things Austen! Jane Austen Anniversary Special

National Library of Australia - 26 Oct @ 3pm

\$30/\$26

See Special Events listing on page 8.

Can Big Tech Really Save Humanity?

Level 4 - 3.30pm

\$28/\$25

What is the true cost of progress, and what do we lose chasing it? As AI, geoengineering, and nanotech promise solutions to global crises, Richard King's *Brave New Wild* reveals how corporations and governments risk breaking our vital connection to nature. In *One Story*, Pip Finkemeyer explores narrative's power in an AI-driven world and Big Tech's pivotal 2010s shift that paved the path we are on today. Innovator Saul Griffith strives to use technology for good - because if innovation can't save us, what can? Moderated by Jennifer Mills (*Salvage*).

Sunday 26 October

Wake Up to Love and Tears

Patrick White Lawns - 10.30am

\$25/\$20

Sunday mornings with a book are a true gift. Join us for a cosy coffee and book chat exploring identity, secrets, big decisions, love, and tears.

Relax into the delight of Rachael Johns' *The Lucky Sisters* and experience Alli Parker's beautiful historical saga, *Until the Red Leaves Fall*, that asks what happens when history and truth interfere with a good story. Immersive, page-turning novels are exactly what we need. Let's celebrate loving what we love! Moderated by Canberra author Tabitha Carvan.



Poems of Love and Rage

Patrick White Lawns - 12pm

\$25/\$20

An electrifying highlight of this year's program, our poetry panel features some of Australia's most acclaimed and innovative poets putting love and rage on the page. Overland Poetry Prize winner Evelyn Araluen (*The Rot*) joins Maxine Beneba Clarke with *Beautiful Changelings*, and hometown spoken word artist Omar Musa. This session delves into the power of love, and the ongoing fight against oppression in its many forms. Don't miss this powerful event. Moderated by Canberra author, artist and performance poet, Jacqui Malins.

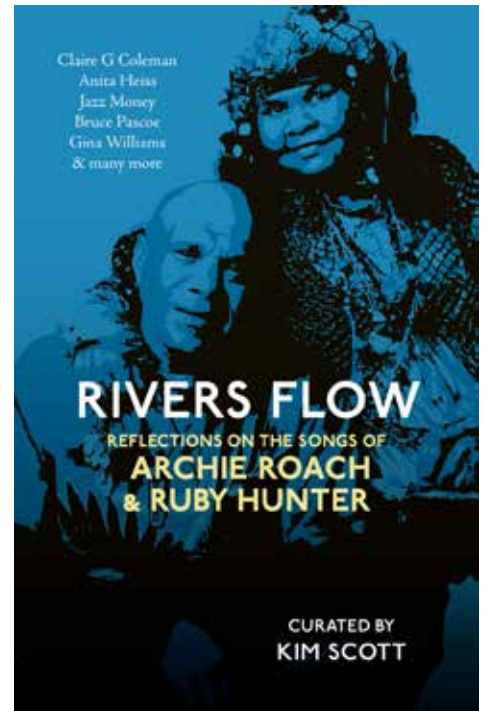


Boys on the Brink?

Patrick White Lawns - 1.30pm

\$25/\$20

Young men can feel lost without clear goals, boundaries or positive role models; and loneliness, tribalism, distrust and violence often result. Three new works explore what can tear away at men and boys. Brandon Jack's *Pissants* reveals life on the fringe of a football team. Vijay Khurana's *The Passenger Seat* follows two teens on a violent, aimless journey on the backroads of Canada. David Stavanger's poetry collection *The Drop Off* offers hope through family struggle. Join them to discuss growing up in today's world, understanding destructive behaviour, and finding unexpected grace. Moderated by Michael Williams, editor of *The Monthly*.



Roach and Hunter

Patrick White Lawns - 3pm

\$25/\$20

An event to celebrate the release of an incredible anthology *Rivers Flow* and honour the profound music, culture and leadership legacy of Archie Roach – a Gunditjmarra, Kirrae Whurrong/Djab Wurrung and Bundjalung man – and Ruby Hunter – a Ngarrindjeri, Kokatha and Pitjantjatjara woman. First Nations writers that have contributed to this wonderful work will pay tribute to these giants of songs and storytelling, and share personal reflections, words and poems. With special guest Darren Rix, nephew of Uncle Archie Roach and Gunditjmarra-Gunaikurnai man with Ngarigo bloodlines joining us, this will be a session out on the grass under the Festival Marquee not to be missed.

Supported by Fremantle Press.

Whitlam: Unleashed and Unvarnished

Representatives - 10am
\$28/\$25

To his many admirers Gough Whitlam transformed Australia into a modern, fairer, and more confident nation, driven by his vision and charisma. Yet in just three turbulent years, his government fell - first dismissed by the Queen's representative, then rejected by voters. Join author Troy Bramston, with AFR Political Editor Phil Coorey, to discuss *Gough Whitlam: Vista of the New*. Drawing on new archives and over 100 interviews, this timely biography offers fresh insight into Whitlam's legacy - his achievements, failures, and the era that reshaped Australia.

Hawke: From Larrikin to Legend

Senate - 10.30am
\$28/\$25

Bob Hawke led Australia through the transformative 1980s with charm, intellect, and all too human flaws. A Rhodes scholar and charismatic leader, he oversaw major reforms like Medicare and the Union Accords, maintaining remarkable popularity while managing a Cabinet of strong personalities. After last year's session on Hawke's early years, join biographer David Day and historian Frank Bongiorno as they explore why Hawke remains widely regarded as one of Australia's most important and influential prime ministers.



Code of Silence: Aussie Women Who Helped Win the War

Representatives - 11.30am
\$28/\$25

For the first time in 80 years, discover the untold story of Australian women's crucial but hidden roles in World War II. Often they worked in secret across the country - from apartments to outback bunkers - intercepting enemy messages and sharing vital intelligence. Many sworn to secrecy, their contributions remained unseen after the war. Join author Diana Thorp and Sita Sargeant, author of *She Shapes History*, as they reveal these incredible women's stories, bringing a female face to the Anzac legend. Supported by CyberCX

#cbrwritersfest



Australia: Sleepwalking off a Cliff?

Senate - 12pm
\$28/\$25

Many Australians wonder if our national success is more luck than skill - and if that luck is running out. Facing an unstable USA, wars, AI, climate crises, and declining living standards, does our democracy have what it takes to cope? Join incisive analyst Amy Remeikis, First Nations advocate Thomas Mayo, and journalist Tracey Kirkland as they explore Australia's democratic resilience, challenges with misinformation, and the urgent need for stronger engagement in a rapidly changing world.

Toys, Curios & Fragments of the Past

Representatives - 1.30pm
\$28/\$25

Objects and records tell captivating stories and reveal social history. In *Playtime: A History of Australian Childhood*, Emily Gallagher explores childhood play and imagination through toys and artefacts from the 1890s to WWII. Anne-Marie Condé, a history curator, steps out from behind museum walls with *The Prime Minister's Potato and Other Essays*, exploring cemeteries, war memorials, and junk shops to uncover fresh insights. Moderated by Kathryn Favelle, this session celebrates the powerful stories behind precious objects and places.

Big Ideas and Bold Reforms

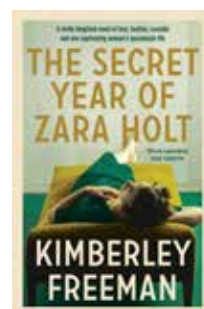
Senate - 2pm
\$28/\$25

Jenny Macklin, known as a Minister on a Mission, led life-changing reforms during the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd era. Her new book, *Making Progress: How Good Policy Happens*, reveals how to achieve lasting progressive change. This session is essential for politics-watchers, public service reformers, and engaged community members. Moderated by Jess Hill who will draw on years of experience working with government, researchers and the community sector trying to achieve better outcomes for families and communities.

Lost and Found: Zara Holt

Representatives - 3pm
\$28/\$25

Long remembered as the wife of a disappeared Prime Minister, Zara Holt was far more. In *The Secret Year of Zara Holt*, Kimberley Freeman vividly portrays her life - from couture fashion design and travel sagas, to business acumen and scandalous friends. Interrogate fact and fancy, and explore why Zara deserves to step out of Harold's shadow. Kimberley joins Sita Sargeant, author and founder of *She Shapes History*, for a captivating conversation about this remarkable woman.



Whitlam's Dismissal: On These Very Steps

Senate - 3.30pm
\$28/\$25

Australia transformed itself under Whitlam, with advances in childcare, equal pay, education, Indigenous land rights, and national independence. But tensions rose in the months before his dismissal. Join Virginia Haussegger, Esther Anatolitis, poet Evelyn Araluen, and Whitlam biographer Troy Bramston for a panel exploring diverse views on Whitlam's legacy and dismissal. They'll discuss the 1975 Woman and Politics Conference, media reactions, Whitlam's impact on Australia's path to a republic, and his role in shaping Indigenous land rights - all leading to the dramatic events on the very steps of Old Parliament House.

Sunday 26 October



Ghosts of the Past

Liangis Theatre - 10am

\$28/\$25

How do the ghosts of our ancestors and their legacies shape us? This conversation explores how books help us journey into the past to question identity, intergenerational debt, and complicity. Acclaimed Bornean-Australian poet and author Omar Musa discusses his new novel *Fierceland*, about siblings confronting their father's destructive fortune in Borneo. He is joined by rising star Steve MinOn, who shares his family's diverse history - from Chinese goldfields to Scottish migration - and his own coming of age and coming out. Moderated by Associate Professor of English, Julieanne Lamond.

Heist at the Museum

Terrace Room - 10.30am

\$28/\$25

Museum heists often evoke images of gold statues and paintings, but Australia's largest museum theft involved 3,000 rare butterfly specimens taken from Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide during the 1940s. In *The Butterfly Thief*, Walter Marsh reveals the life and crimes of confessed thief Colin Wyatt, and explores a broader story of 'collector's mania'. In an era of repatriation and decolonisation, were our museums always crime scenes? Join Walter and journalist and author Michael Brissenden for this fascinating discussion.

Honouring and Escaping our Ancestors

Liangis Theatre - 11.30am

\$28/\$25

How are women caught between honouring family, homelands and traditions while forging their own paths? Join two powerful new voices in Australian literature as they explore identity, belonging, and independence. In *An Onslaught of Light*, Natasha Rai captures a young woman's journey to reconcile her Indian heritage with her queer identity. Emma Pei Yin's *When Sleeping Women Wake* reveals the enduring bond between women separated by war. Together, Natasha and Emma discuss the strength families provide - and the boundaries they may create. Moderated by author and journalist Aarti Betigeri.



NZ Family Reckoning: Family Secrets & Coming of Age

Terrace Room - 12pm

\$28/\$25

Is there something special in the New Zealand air at the moment? We bring you exciting Kiwi authors sharing captivating family and place stories through youthful perspectives. Jennifer Trevelyan's debut, *A Beautiful Family*, praised by Liane Moriarty and Hannah Kent, comes with a remarkable publishing journey. She's joined by New Zealand treasure Dominic Hoey, novelist, poet and playwright, whose latest novel *1985* tells a coming-of-age tale for underdogs and dreamers. This lively conversation is moderated by author and journalist Paul Daley.



Bonds of Love and Family

Liangis Theatre - 1.30pm

\$28/\$25

Family (whether we chose or were born with them) bind us together through the good and bad times. But what happens when these bonds are too tight? Or the quests we share to survive illness and heartbreak are too great? Madeleine Gray (*Chosen Family*) and Katherine Brabon (*Cure*) have both written about the beautiful but desperate relationships that can form, particularly between women, and how they can create and dismantle sense of self. This one is for lovers of exciting new literary fiction.

Family Sagas: Japan, Hong Kong and Australia

Terrace Room - 2pm

\$28/\$25

Join Alli Parker (*Until the Red Leaves Fall*) and Emma Pei Yin (*When Sleeping Women Wake*) in conversation with Kate Evans from ABC Radio National's *The Bookshelf*. These authors explore family ties and history to craft powerful intergenerational novels about women enduring war, loss, and disconnection. They'll discuss their personal connections to their books, Hong Kong and Japanese WWII history, reflect on the stories we long to tell - and the pressure to reveal the truth.

Espionage in our Age

Liangis Theatre - 3pm

\$28/\$25

Shankari Chandran and Sam Guthrie take us into Parliament House's corridors, Hong Kong's towers and Colombo's streets, chasing dark international secrets. As US influence wanes and China rises, sabotage, blackmail and murder threaten political stability and hide war crimes. In their gripping thrillers *The Peak* and *Unfinished Business*, they reveal how close we are to global chaos. Join the authors to explore why international espionage is more compelling than ever. Moderated by ABC Canberra's Alice Matthews.

canberrawritersfestival.com.au

CWF Kids & YA Day: Create. Imagine. Explore!

Get ready for the inaugural CWF Kids and YA Day and join us for an action-packed line-up of interactive sessions and workshops with writing and drawing superstars and local heroes. From picture book magic to primary-aged series and teen fiction, this day celebrates reading for families and kids of all ages!



Runt! Page to Picture

Film Screening plus Q&A with Craig Silvey

Sat 25 Oct - 1pm

Dendy Cinema Canberra

Bookings via Dendy Cinemas

See heart-warming children's novel *Runt* come to life with a special screening and conversation with author Craig Silvey. Hear Craig talk about turning his book into a major movie and his love for storytelling. Whether you are a young reader, an aspiring storyteller, or just eager for a heartwarming yarn, this event promises joy, inspiration, and a few twists. What's next in store? Hear Craig reveal snippets from his latest book *Runt and the Diabolical Dognapping*. In conversation with Cadance Bell, author, producer and director.

FOR ALL AGES

National Museum Of Australia Sunday 26 October

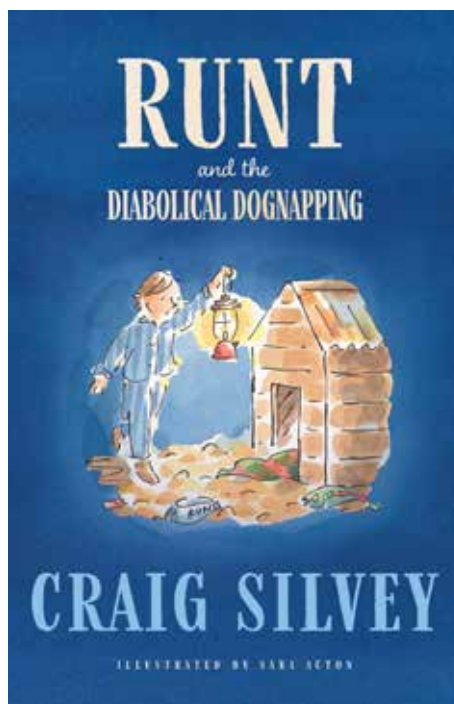
Runt, the Outback Hero

Peninsula Room - 9.30-10.30am

All Tickets \$15

Leap into an outback mystery with acclaimed author Craig Silvey as he shares the delightful and much anticipated sequel to family favourite, *Runt*. We again travel alongside Annie and her loyal companion in this charming, funny, and feel-good adventure for readers of all ages, *Runt and the Diabolical Dognapping*. Above all this session will be a celebration of all our furry and not-so-furry pets and companions. Craig will be in conversation with Canberra's bestselling author, local vet and lover of animals, Karen Viggers. Bring a photo or drawing of the special pets in your life if you want to share it.

FOR ALL AGES



Let's Have a Draw Off!

Visions Theatre - 9.30-10.30am

All Tickets \$15

See three incredible illustrators in an interactive drawing showdown! Featuring a whirlwind of live, and potentially zany, doodles from Bill Hope (*You & Me and the Peanut Butter Beast*), Eleri Harris (*A Loo of One's Own*) and David Conley (*That Book About Life Before Dinosaurs*). Guaranteed to ignite imaginations with audience suggestions part of the fun, and a reminder that art is for all.

Recommended ages 6+.

National Museum Of Australia

Sunday 26 October



Andy Griffiths, Bill Hope & The Legendary Peanut Butter Beast!

Peninsula Room - 11am-12pm

All Tickets \$15

Grab your homemade helmets as beloved children's author Andy Griffiths and illustrator Bill Hope take us on their most dangerous escapade yet. With YOU as the main character, hilarious adventures and live drawing, this will be a highly interactive session not to be missed. Dive headfirst into boundless imagination with *You & Me and the Peanut Butter Beast*. Come and be creative and funny together! Stick around after to meet Andy and Bill for book signings.

Recommended ages 6-12.



Danger Countdown: Race the Clock with Jack Heath

Peninsula Room 1.00-2.00pm

All Tickets \$15

Get ready for thrills with famed local storyteller Jack Heath as he cracks open the explosive world of his action-packed stories! Designed to hook even the most reluctant readers, Jack's *Minutes of Danger* series, and other heart-thumping books for children and teens feature brave kids in a race against time. This is 60 action-packed minutes of stories and suspense to fire up your imagination and leave you buzzing with ideas. Book signing to follow.

Recommended ages 9+

Storytime in the Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre

Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre play and learn space

FREE WITH ENTRY, BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

Bring the little ones as some of Canberra's wonderful children picture book authors read from their work throughout the day. With books about cats, wombats, dung beetles, swift parrots and a whole host of other animals – this session will be a chance to celebrate Aussie animals, giggle and play.

For 2-6 year olds

Workshops for Kids

Design a Garden Workshop Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre Workshop - 9.15-10.15am All Tickets \$15

Children around Australia have started a revolution! From the coast of WA to Canberra they've been discovering nature in their schools and neighbourhoods, planting to attract bees, birds and butterflies, and building insect hotels. Join Dr Judy Friedlander (*The Bee Squad*) to learn how to design a garden that will attract birds, butterflies and other pollinators to your backyard or balcony. This will be a fun, interactive and colourful activity to help you make a difference in your neighbourhood with plantings, habitats and more. Get started on creating a comfortable home for the tiny animals around you!

For ages 10+

Dare to Draw and Cartoon Around Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre Workshop - 1.00-2.00pm All Tickets \$15

This is a workshop for kids and teens that love drawing in all its forms. Get tips from cartoonist and illustrators Eleri Harris (*A Loo of One's Own*) and David Conley (*That Book About Life Before Dinosaurs*) on how they approach their pencils, pens and the page. How do they free themselves up to experiment and dare to get it wrong before they get something down they like?

For ages 10+

Workshops for Kids

Talented Tales: Trim the Cat

Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre Workshop - 11am-12pm **Child \$15 accompanying adults free.**

Bookings essential. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Sail the seas with Trim the cat and create your own book! Author Ursula Dubosarsky takes you on a journey with Trim, the star of a new picture book published by the National Museum of Australia. After hearing of Trim's adventures, join Ursula for a workshop and create your own book featuring Trim. Bring your imagination!

Recommended ages 3-8

Express yourself! Poems, Songs and Sounds

Tim and Gina Fairfax Discovery Centre Workshop - 3.00-4.00pm **All Tickets \$15**

This is a workshop for budding young poets and those who want to use their voices in different forms to say something about what they see around them!

Maxine Beneba Clarke has written limericks, haiku, verse, tongue-twisters, sonnets and more in *Stuff I'm (Not) Sorry For*. Ever experienced the unbearable itch of chicken pox? Annoyed at having to use your parent's Spotify account? Smashed a window with a cricket ball? Enjoyed the glorious sweetness of fairy floss? Worn your afro high and proud? Felt anxiety at reading a text message? Or do you want to say something else entirely? Get tips for sharing your experience of the world in your own special way.

For ages 9-12.



Young Adult Events

Canberra Youth Theatre

Emerging Playwright Commission Award

Presented as part of the 2025 Canberra Writers Festival

12.00-1.00pm

FREE EVENT – Bookings Essential

Join us in celebrating the new voices shaping the future of Australian theatre. Canberra Youth Theatre's Emerging Playwright Commission is a career-changing opportunity for an emerging playwright to create a play that brings the stories and voices of young people to the stage. At this special event, hear excerpts from three outstanding 2025 finalists from over 40 applicants around the country, showcasing the imagination of a new generation of writers. The winner will then be announced, receiving a full commission to develop a brand-new work that continues Canberra Youth Theatre's commitment to nurturing exceptional theatrical talent.

The Emerging Playwright Commission is generously supported by Holding Redlich.

#cbrwritersfest

Reimagining Worlds, Reclaiming Power

Visions Theatre - 1.30-2.30pm

All Tickets \$15

From parallel portals, supernatural powers, and gothic magic – this session has them all! Lisa Fuller (*Washpool*), Jasmin McGaughey (*Moonlight and Dust*), and Sandy Bigna (*Little Bones*) know how to blend mind-bending fantasy to reveal truths about our real world. Their characters navigate messy, transitional spaces, using magic to explore grief, discrimination, friendship, and what it means to belong somewhere. Come hear how these authors create fictional worlds that feel authentic, represent cultures respectfully, and give us all the power to tell our own stories. #LoveOzYA

Hearts, Humour & Growing Up: Does True Love Exist?

Visions Theatre - 3.00-4.00pm

All Tickets \$15

Love is most definitely not just butterflies and first kisses. Join Sasha Vey (*The Set-Up Girl*) and Gabrielle Tozer (*The Unexpected Mess of It All*) as they dive into how YA coming-of-age rom coms explore the complicated, often chaotic experience of growing up. From awkward crushes and friendships during high school, to navigating funny and fraught relationship dynamics, these authors share their behind-the-scenes takes on the genre. Come ready to swoon, giggle and maybe even recognise yourself in their characters, who are just trying to figure it out, one disaster at a time. A double take on #LoveOzYA!



Masterclasses

& Writing Craft Group Sessions

Marie Reay
Teaching
Centre, ANU

Saturday 25th October

Writing about family with Spiri Tsintziras

10.00am-12.00pm

\$120/\$100

How can you write truthful, authentic narratives about your life that include family members? Are you worried about alienating people still in your life? And what about those who are estranged, or are no longer alive to tell their side of the story? Three-time memoirist Spiri Tsintziras helps navigate the sometimes-choppy waters of including family in life writing—and surviving. If you've considered writing your life but felt too scared, you're about to embark on writing difficult material, or paralysed by fear that you'll be a pariah at the next family event, this masterclass is for you.

Australian Gothic and Suspense with Jessica Mansour-Nahra

10.00am-12.00pm

\$120/\$100

Join Jessica Mansour-Nahra, author of gothic thriller *The Farm*, in a session that breaks down the key components of writing a psychological suspense novel that will immerse readers in unrelenting tension. Jessica will explain how the Australian Gothic genre can be a powerful vehicle to drive narrative suspense while exploring modern themes, including fertility, relationships, control and psychological despair. Critical to Australian Gothic is exploring different experiences of the Australian landscape, drawing on its harsh nature, deadly animals and our human vulnerability. Jessica will share techniques and exercises that will help writers establish a vivid sense of place while thinking about the fears their characters may be unwilling to confront.

A Writing Q&A with Heather Rose

11.00am-12.30pm

\$80/\$70

Spend 90 minutes with Heather Rose asking the questions you most want answered about your own writing: Are you writing historical fiction? How do you balance the story with the historical facts? How do you create a world from centuries ago? Are you writing memoir? How much is good to share? How do you balance the truth with trauma? Do you have a novel where the characters are problematic – or the plot? Are you at a point where you've simply lost direction in your manuscript? How do you maintain discipline while juggling work and family? How do you seek constructive feedback? What happens once a manuscript has been rejected? What happens when it's been accepted? Bring your journal or notepad, pens, sticky notes and courage. No recordings, no filming. Just writers learning how to become better writers.

Self on the page: My writing life

12.30pm-1.30pm

\$50/\$45

Join three writers for this group session as they share the joys and perils of their writing lives. How do they put themselves on the page? What do their characters end up meaning to them? Can they earn a crust? Why do they keep going? Irma Gold (*Shift*), David Stavanger (*The Drop Off*) and Natasha Rai (*An Onslaught of Light*) will confess what this writing caper means to them, inspirations for their latest works, when they have felt exposed, and the love that keeps them going. They will also read passages that mean the most to them from their latest works. Moderated by journalist and author of *Troll Hunting*, Ginger Gorman.

Writing our Climate Change Age with Jane Rawson & Natalie Kyriacou

2.00pm-3.30pm

\$50/\$45

In this practical small group session Jane Rawson and Natalie Kyriacou will share how they approach the task of writing about our world in this climate change age. How do they try to reach people with their words? How do they look after themselves while doing it? Jane has a wealth of experience writing on this topic across many formats. In 2015 she released *The Handbook: Surviving & Living with Climate Change* and, after having tackled many other books and writing projects, has recently released *Human/Nature*. Natalie, author of *Nature's Last Dance*, is an environmentalist, social justice advocate and social entrepreneur who aims to inspire action with her words. This is a session for those keen to write about our natural world, environmental issues and climate change, and have an impact. Facilitated by writer, tsunami scientist, and lover of all things ocean, Kaya Wilson.

Finding the Heart of the Story: Editing for Pulse and Structure with Katia Ariel

2.30-4.30pm

\$120/\$100

This two-hour workshop will teach you to become your own best structural editor. Regardless of genre, all strong writing has one underlying feature: it grabs the reader's attention and keeps it. How do we craft our narrative with maximum colour, emotional compression and narrative momentum? How do we deploy voice and setting to create a rich and compelling world? What does it mean to be brutally honest with yourself when deciding what to keep and what to cut? This hands-on workshop will include structural editing techniques, practical exercises and many examples of how a ten per cent refinement can make a one hundred per cent difference.

canberrawritersfestival.com.au

Masterclasses & Writing Craft Group Sessions

Marie Reay
Teaching
Centre, ANU

Sunday 26th October

Ask Hannah Kent

10.00am -12.00 noon

\$120/\$100

Join Hannah Kent, author of *Burial Rites*, *The Good People*, *Devotion* and *Always Home, Always Homesick* for this informal masterclass to ask questions about her craft. How does she approach writing? What does her research process look like? This Q&A format will allow you to find out more about her writing life and receive unvarnished sage advice relevant for your own work. Come along with the questions you want to ask to make the most of the session. This is a rare chance to really understand what it takes to complete a novel or memoir and tread the path to publication. This session will be facilitated by writer, literary critic and former CWF Artistic Director, Beejay Silcox.

Working with First Nations' Stories and Story Owners: Craig Cormick and Darren Rix

10.00am-12.00 noon

\$120/\$100

Do you want to deepen your understanding of how to best work with First Nations' stories and story owners? Come along and learn from co-authors of *Warra Warra Wai*, Craig Cormick and Darren Rix. Craig is an award-winning author, science communicator and long-time supporter of the Canberra and broader writing community across Australia. Darren is an author, musician and cultural leader and guide, a Gunditjmara-GunaiKurnai man with Ngarigo bloodlines. Together they will introduce you to some of the great cultural guides that exist for writers and researchers, and highlight principles using different types of consultations and engagements they undertook for *Warra Warra Wai* as case study examples. Craig and Darren will also work with people on their own particular issues, questions or concerns, brainstorming what might be the best way forward with the group.

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Art of the Short Story

10.30am-11.30am **\$50/\$45**

In this practical small group session Lucy Nelson (*Wait Here*) and Vijay Khurana (*The Passenger Seat*) will share the art of the short story. Why do they love the form? What can it do that novels can't? In a world of ever shorter attention spans, is the short story in ascendency? Together they will reveal top lessons they have learnt about what can make or break a short story. Moderated by author and *Secrets from the Green Room* podcaster, Irma Gold.

Writing for Screen - Q&A with Michael Lucas

10.30am-12.30pm **\$120/\$100**

Want to write a TV series or adapt a work for screen? This is an unmissable chance to learn from multi-award winning screenwriter Michael Lucas. He made his debut with the indie feature comedy *Not Suitable For Children*, nominated for five Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Awards and winning the Australian Writers' Guild Award for Best Original Feature Film Screenplay. Moving into television, Michael has built a stellar career as a writer and producer on much-loved series including *Offspring*, *Party Tricks*, *Wentworth*, *Rosehaven*, *The Newsreader* and *Five Bedrooms*. This is your chance to ask questions and get behind-the-scenes advice. Michael will share: screen highlights to illustrate how his scripts came to life; the power of fantastic dialogue; strategies for keeping audiences on the edge of their seats; and what to do when you need to strike the page, clear your head and start again.

Wrestling with Epic Fantasy with Lev Grossman

11.00am-1.00pm **\$120/\$100**

Join this two-hour workshop with Lev Grossman to understand how to give full flight to, and then tame, your epic fantasy beast. Whether you are writing with history as inspiration or drawing from an imagined future, fantasy (and the adjacent genres of sci-fi, cli-fi and historical fiction) brings up some huge and exciting challenges. This is a whirlwind top tips masterclass on world building, settling the logic and schema of the universe your characters inhabit and then plotting their hero (or anti-hero) journeys. Lev will share gems of wisdom, truths learnt the hard way, and cut-through advice you can take on your writing journey.

Inner Landscaping: Discovering nature's code for cultivating creativity with Kinchem Hedegus

12pm-2pm **\$120/\$100**

This workshop is an invitation to reawaken your creativity by reimagining yourself as a thriving, adaptive ecosystem. Inspired by Julia Cameron's, *The Artist's Way*, and rooted in permaculture, *Inner Landscaping* is a powerful process to inspire you to live more fully, consciously, and creatively - in harmony with nature. The workshop explores creativity as a purposeful bridge between your inner and outer landscapes. Kinchem will begin by briefly telling the story of *Inner Landscaping* before introducing you to a fun, creative and practical guide to cultivating your own creative ecology.

Foundations of Character with Natasha Rai

2 - 4pm **\$120/\$100**

Strong stories start with strong characters. This workshop is focused and hands-on, designed to help you craft believable, emotionally resonant characters who drive the narrative and stay with readers long after the story ends. In this two-hour session, you'll explore the core building blocks of great character writing: personality, backstory, motivation, flaws, and emotional stakes. Through practical exercises and guided discussion, you'll develop a character, map their emotional arc, and write a short scene that reveals who they are under pressure.

She Shapes
History Quest
Tours at
9.30am and
12.30pm

Saturday 25 October

	National Library of Australia		Patrick White Lawns	MOAD		
	Theatre	Level 4	Festival Village	Sen Chambers	Rep Chambers	
10am	What Happened in the Outback?		Gardening Across Generations	Wake Up: Essays...		
10.15am						
10.30am		End of Days or Start of Something New?			Diplomats and Disasters: Embassies on the Front Line	
10.45am						
11am						
11.15am						
11.30am	Desperately Seeking Stoicism		Nature is Human	Method or Madness?		
11.45am						
12pm		Reckoning			The USA, Trump and Friends	
12.15pm						
12.30pm						
12.45pm						
1pm			Plug In!			
1.15pm						
1.30pm	Some of My Favourite Books	Finding Elizabeth Harrower		Stalin, Mao... Putin, Xi, Trump? The March of Authoritarian History		
1.45pm						
2pm						
2.15pm						
2.30pm			Endurance & The Need for Speed: A Motorcycling Life	Profit vs. Human vs. Planet		
2.45pm						
3pm	Legend, Re-Imagined: The Bright Sword	Wellness & Cure			Dispatch from the Diplomat	
3.15pm						
3.30pm						
3.45pm						
4pm			What is with Canberra and Crime?	Conspiracy vs. Trust		
4.15pm						
4.30pm	Unlocking Place: From Morocco to American South West	Lonely, Sacred, Desperate and Divine				
4.45pm						
5pm						
5.15pm						
5.30pm						
5.45pm						
6pm		The Long Arc: Culture, Craft and Creative Power in Indian Australian Stories				
6.15pm						
6.30pm	Dalton Defies Gravity: Trent Dalton in Conversation					
6.45pm						
7pm						
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10-11pm						

#cbrwritersfest 29

Sunday 26 October

	National Library of Australia		Patrick White Lawns	MOAD			
	Theatre	Level 4	Fest Village	Rep Chambers	Sen Chambers		
9.00am							
9.30am							
10am	Our Worlds Our Way			Whitlam: Unleashed and Unvarnished			
10.15am							
10.30am		Policewoman Kate Cocks Turned Fiction	Wake Up to Love and Tears			Hawke - From Larrikin to Legend	
10.45am							
11am							
11.15am							
11.30am	Kathleen Folbigg's Story: Friendship and Fight for Justice			Code of Silence: Aussie Women who Helped Win the War			
11.45am							
12pm		Great Classics of Power, Politics and Passion: A Very Canberra Conversation	Poems of Love and Rage			Australia: Sleepwalking off a Cliff?	
12.15pm							
12.30pm							
12.45pm							
1pm							
1.15pm							
1.30pm	Pink Ink! The Lucky Sisters? In Conversation with Rachael Johns		Boys on the Brink?	Toys, Curios & Fragments of the Past			
1.45pm							
2pm		Murder, Mayhem, Manners: Classic Mystery with a Twist					Big Ideas and Bold Reforms
2.15pm							
2.30pm							
2.45pm							
3pm	All Things Austen! Jane Austen Anniversary Special		Roach and Hunter	Lost and Found: Zara Holt			
3.15pm							
3.30pm		Can Big Tech Really Save Humanity?					Whitlam's Dismissal: On These Very Steps
3.45pm							
4pm							
4.15pm							
4.30pm							

Early events

Tues 7 Oct	Dream State: In Conversation with Great American Novelist - Eric Puchner!	National Library of Australia
Mon 13 Oct	Our Own Chris Hammer	ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre
Fri 17 Oct	Girl on Girl: Modern Misogyny Gone Global	Verity Lane Market
Wed 22 Oct	Insiders Live with David Speers	National Press Club
Thur 23 Oct	Opening Night: The Haunting Australia of Jane Harper	National Museum of Australia
Fri 24 Oct	Jana Wendt: The Stories Around Us	Hyatt Hotel Canberra
	ACT Book of the Year Awards	National Library of Australia
	Art and Words: Celebrating Literature & Contemporary Artists	National Portrait Gallery
	Mervyn Bishop in Black, White and Colour	National Portrait Gallery
	Guts: In Conversation with Melissa Leong	Louis Dining
	In Love with Tasmania: Heather Rose in Conversation	National Library of Australia

National Portrait Gallery		National Museum of Australia				ANU Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre	
Theatre	Terrace	Peninsula Room	Visions Theatre	Discovery Centre	Workshops	Cinema	Manning Clark Hall
		Runt! The Outback Hero	Let's Have A Draw Off!	Storytime Session	Design A Garden Workshop		
Ghosts of the Past							
	Heist at the Museum						
		Andy Griffiths, Bill Hope & The Legendary Peanut Butter Beast!		Storytime Session	Talented Tales: Trim the Cat	Salvaging the Earth?	
Honouring and Escaping Our Ancestors							
	NZ Family Reckoning: Secrets & Coming of Age		Canberra Youth Theatre Emerging Playwright Commission Award				Caught in Conflict
				Storytime Session		Lay The World Bare	
		Danger Countdown: Race the Clock			Dare to Draw and Cartoon Around		
Bonds of Love and Family			Reimagining Worlds, Reclaiming Power				
	Family Sagas: Japan, Hong Kong, and Australia			Storytime Session			
							One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This
Espionage in Our Age			Hearts, Humour & Growing Up: Does True Love Exist?		Express Yourself Poems, Songs and Sounds		

Support the Canberra Writers Festival - Help Stories Thrive

The Canberra Writers Festival is more than a celebration of books - it's a vital platform for creativity, connection, and conversation. Each year, it brings together storytellers, thinkers, and readers to explore ideas, challenge perspectives, and inspire change through the power of words.

But we can't do it without you.

Your donation - no matter the size - helps keep the Festival alive and growing. It ensures we can continue to host thought-provoking panels, hands-on workshops, and unforgettable encounters with authors from across Australia and the world.

By supporting the Canberra Writers Festival, you're investing in a vibrant cultural future - one where storytelling continues to educate, empower, and unite our community.

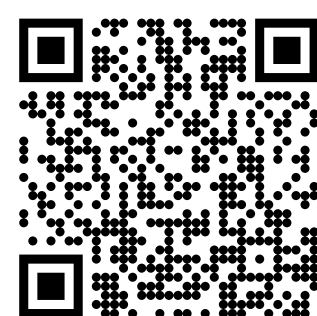
Make a tax-deductible donation today.

Your generosity will directly support the Festival's future, helping literature and ideas flourish in Canberra and beyond.

Together, let's champion the written word.

#cbrwritersfest

Donate here:



EXPERIENCE KOREA THIS SUMMER

FILM ♥ FASHION ♥ DRAMA ♥ BEAUTY ♥ MUSIC



한류!

HALLYU!

THE KOREAN WAVE

YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS DEC 2025
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V&A

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touring the world

national
museum
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