

## Annual General Meeting minutes (DRAFT)

The 30th Annual General Meeting for the Calendar Year 2018 of Writers Victoria Incorporated (ABN 18 268 487 576) was held on Wednesday 27 March 2019 at 6pm (at the Wheeler Centre, 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC).

Agenda Item, Discussion and Decisions	Motions and Actions
<p><b>1 Welcome, Attendance and Apologies</b></p> <p>Nic Brasch declared the meeting open 6.04pm.</p> <p>Nic Brasch welcomed members, nominated members, Committee members and patron Chrstos Tsoilkas.</p> <p>35 Financial members in attendance (with voting rights).</p> <p>Staff in attendance (without voting rights): Angela Savage, Frances Terrett, Deanne Sheldon-Collins; Emma Cayley; Lyndel Caffrey, Flora Lun, Emma Mackenzie.</p> <p>Apologies received from: Donata Carazzo, Michelle Scott Tucker, Abi Chellapen, Proxies received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donatta Carrazza</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting</b></p> <p>Nic Brasch presented the minutes of the 2018 Annual General Meeting. There were no comments or corrections. Favour: 10 Against: 0</p>	<p><b>MOTION:</b> The minutes of the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Writers Victoria were accepted as a true and correct record of that meeting MOVED: NK SECONDED: VS CARRIED with a clear majority</p>
<p><b>3. Incorporation Update</b></p> <p>Nic Brasch provided an overview from barrister, Anthong Land, that outlined the limitations of incorporation in seeking approval from every member and no overall benefits. These were the main reasons the CoM decided incorporation should not be pursued.</p> <p>Nic Brasch opened discussion for any questions.</p> <p>Sarah Jensen asked whether the member privacy issues had been resolved.</p> <p>Angela Savage confirmed stronger capacity for privacy and the issue has been resolved.</p>	

#### 4. 2018 Reports (from Annual Report)

- **Angela Savage delivered the Director’s Report for 2018**

Angela Savage referred members to her Director’s Report:

Our 2018 program theme, ‘Looking Out, Looking In’, encouraged Victoria’s writers to look outwards to invigorate our imaginations, question our assumptions and become better at our creative practice. At Writers Victoria, we led by example, extending our work into new territory, literally and figuratively.

‘Writers on the Road’, funded by Creative Victoria, enabled us to tour ten outstanding authors for 21 events in ten locations across regional Victoria. A further 33 regional activities took place with the support of the Grace Marion Wilson Trust, including the Casey Writers Project — part of our new outreach to Interface Councils — subsequently funded by the City of Casey.

We secured new funding through Creative Victoria’s Talent Matters program for the Publishability Project, which supports four Write-ability Fellows over two years to develop their manuscripts for submission to publishers. At the same time, in partnership with Arts Access Victoria, we are working with the publishers to help make the industry more inclusive of writers with disability — an exciting initiative that aims to contribute to culture change.

Our first masterclasses for established writers were delivered by Charlotte Wood, Ryan O’Neill and Jane Hirshfield.

Our inaugural Digital Writer in Residence, funded by the Loula Rodopoulos Sub-fund of the Victorian Women’s Trust, was Gabriella Muñoz. “A digital residency with Writers Victoria is a life-changing experience,” Gabriella says. “I’m a migrant woman with two very young children, and the support, advice and encouragement that Writers Victoria gave me ... helped my writing in so many ways.” We’ve secured a City of Melbourne Arts Grant to expand the Digital Residency program in 2019.

Closer to home, we farewelled several valued, long-term staff members in 2018: General Manager Alexis Drevikovsky; Membership Officer/Development Coordinator Sarah Vincent; Program Manager Claire Capel-Stanley; Write-ability Project Lead/Regional Program Officer Harriet Gaffney; Finance Officer Adriane Howell; and Write-ability Program Assistant Alex Fairhill. We thank them for their significant contributions to Writers Victoria and wish them well for the creative and professional opportunities that lie ahead.

Kate Cuthbert was appointed as our new Program Manager; Frances Terrett and Emma Mackenzie share the Membership Officer role, with Frances also working as Development Officer; and Leah Jing McIntosh joined the team as Digital Communications Officer. Jax Jacki Brown manages the Publishability Project, and Anja Goedhart assists in planning our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

- **Nic Brasch delivered the Chair’s Report for 2018**

I am delighted to report that throughout 2018 Writers Victoria continued to represent Victoria’s writing community with the vigour, passion and commitment it had for the previous 28 years. This despite operating in an environment in which there are more and more organisations and ventures competing for diminishing funds – and consumers having increased access to other sources of information and services for free. Of course,

**MOTION:** The 2018 Annual Report (including the audited financial accounts) were accepted:

MOVED: VS

SECONDED: PH

CARRIED with a clear majority

Favour: 21

Against: 0

the services that Writers Victoria offers are of exceptional quality, and we remain committed to paying tutors, assessors and mentors among the highest rates in the industry; yet, some people remain to be convinced (and maybe never will).

Perhaps partly as a result of the above, and certainly for other reasons, Writers Victoria experienced a small but noticeable decline in membership in 2018. There is certainly no reason for panic, as we came off several years of continual growth that resulted in record membership the previous year, but it is something the Committee of Management has asked management to monitor and address.

Among Writers Victoria's major achievements in 2018 have been even more initiatives to assist and promote writers from diverse backgrounds, and writers with a disability. Our Writeability and Publishability programs are testament to this, though not the only initiatives in these areas. There is no doubt that we are international leaders in providing opportunities for writers from diverse backgrounds, and writers with a disability.

We also embarked on partnerships with local councils that will take Writers Victoria into communities where we have had little exposure or impact in the past. That's very exciting indeed.

My highlight of the year was our inaugural annual State of the (Writing) Oration that was delivered by Tony Birch. It attracted a great crowd and both the buzz on the night and the later feedback indicated that there could have been no better person to start this initiative. I would like to thank Tony, particularly for donating his fee back to Writers Victoria as a donation.

I would like to thank all of the staff for their endeavours in 2018. The Committee acknowledges it was a trying year for the staff, with several long-term employees leaving the organisation. Your efforts, led by our Director, Angela Savage, are most appreciated.

Thanks also to our wonderful volunteers and interns without whom we would not be able to do half of what we do.

Thank you to the generous departments, organisations and individuals that provide funding to Writers Victoria – all of whom are mentioned elsewhere within this report.

Finally, my gratitude to the members of the Committee of Management who continued to provide their views and expertise with passion (and on a voluntary basis). It is my pleasure to announce that our treasurer, Victor Sekulov was nominated for the Commonwealth Bank Not-for-Profit Treasurers' Awards 2018, a nomination richly deserved.

The Committee members who helped steer the strategic direction of Writers Victoria in 2018 were Deputy Chair Michelle Scott-Tucker, Treasurer Victor Sekulov, Secretary Peter Hill, Donata Carrazza, Noè Harsel, Abi Chellapen, Ingrid Baring (until March 2018), Bernadette Schwerdt (until March 2018), Astrid Edwards (Deputy Chair to mid-2018, resigned). Thank you to all of you for your efforts and support.

- **Victor Sekulov delivered the Treasurer's Report audited financial accounts for 2018**

Writers Victoria sustained a healthy financial performance in 2018 with revenue levels continuing to increase year on year. Despite experiencing slight declines in our income streams, namely membership, manuscript assessments and revenue from workshops, Writers Victoria was able to achieve a revenue level of close to \$1.1 million, its highest ever.

This was achieved through the unquestionable hard work of our management team at Writers Victoria, successfully securing grants from the City of Casey for its 'Casey Writers' project as well as being only one of ten organisations to receive funding through Creative Victoria's Talent Matters program for our 'Publishability' project. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in securing federal funding through the Australia Council for the Arts grants in 2018. Countering that, though, we secured new funding in the form of a City of Melbourne Arts Grant for 'Only Connect: Digital Residencies for Writers Who Are Carers' (starting 2019).

For 2018 we reported a small surplus of \$1,596 for the year, after depreciation. Our cash holdings and financial position remains strong and provides the organisation a solid economic platform for the future. It was pleasing to note our cash investments continue to be well above \$600,000.

It is quite clear that the Arts environment is a challenging one and will continue to be so in the future. Economic, financial and social trends all play a significant role in shaping the arts arena and Writers Victoria has pursued its strategic objectives to ensure it is operating as a viable service that is meeting the needs of the writing public.

2019 brings with it more challenges but Writers Victoria is well positioned to be the premier source of support for all writers, early, emerging and established. With improved systems, strong programming and new partnerships, we look forward to sustaining our organisation into the future.

Questions:

Bryan Keon-Cohen queried revenue, membership decline and volunteers; in particular the gender reflections in both volunteers and memberships.

Angela Savage noted the national stabilisation of writing organisations and membership decline as a trend and noted 25% increase in regional based memberships.

Nic Brasch provided an overview of CoM discussions regarding prospective services; in particular emerging writers and younger members to increase revenue.

Nic Brasch also noted data collection to develop strategies regarding volunteers, memberships, and regional membership were targeted and doubled.

##### **5. Election of new members to the Committee of Management**

The Committee is made up of 7 places elected from the membership and up to 3 appointed members that the Committee chooses to ensure we have the mix and balance skills and expertise we need.

We received 6 nominations for the 4 Committee of Management positions that have become available at this meeting.

Your voting forms include the names of the six nominees.

Candidates were asked to make a short statement on why they nominated and what they thought they could bring to the CoM.

The following Candidates read out a short statement: Andrew Bush, Sarah Jensen, Noe Harsel, Bryan Keon-Cohen and Amy Maddison read out a short statement.

NB read out a short statement on behalf of Donata Carrazza.

Voting was undertaken by a secret onymous ballot by returning officer Deanne Sheldon-Collins and two Writers Victoria staff.

**OUTCOME:** The following members were elected to the Committee of Management (in alphabetical order):

- Donata Carrazza
- Noe Harsel
- Bryan Keon-Cohen
- Amy Maddison

<p><b>6. Any other business.</b> Nothing to report.</p> <p><b>7. Acknowledgements</b> Nic Brasch acknowledged and thanked a number of staff and committee members who made a great contribution to Writers Victoria in 2018.</p>	
<p><b>Close of meeting</b> The meeting was closed at 7.15pm</p>	

These Minutes were accepted by Writers Victoria members as a true and accurate record of the Annual General Meeting held on **Wednesday 27 March 2019.**

**Chair: Nicolas Brasch**  
**Committee of Management**  
**Writers Victoria**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_