

WRITERS
VICTORIA

All about writers

2021 – 2023

Strategic Plan





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You can find the contact details for specific team members [on our website](#).

Acknowledgement

The Writers Victoria office is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. Writers Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we work, meet and live across Victoria and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. First Nations people were the first storytellers on this land, which always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

“Writers Victoria reminds me I am part of a community and makes me recognise the importance of community organisations in ensuring that isolation doesn’t become a bunker”

Christos Tsiolkas



CEO's Message

Lucy Hamilton

We support Victorian writers and storytellers.

Writing is a craft that allows both writers and readers to reflect on ourselves, to understand each other, and to forge shared bonds through storytelling. Writing also contributes significantly to Victoria's economy through creative industries, as well as through innovation across other industries.

Our membership is over 2,500 strong and made up of people across the state. It includes both world-renowned authors and those tinkering with getting their story down for the first time. It includes, amongst others, writers of literary fiction, genre and poetry, but also journalists, marketers and copywriters. Our community extends beyond our membership, and in our 2017-2020 strategic period we reached 12,711 writers across Victoria through programming, fellowships, residencies and travel grants.

Whether a writer is established or just starting out. Whether they write as a career. If they write for pleasure, or use storytelling as a creative tool in a completely unrelated-to-the-arts business. If they write, we support them.

The large community of writers we represent also lets **us** tell stories about the importance of writing to Victoria. We want to make sure writers are valued and creative industries are supported to thrive.

At the time of writing (January 2021), the medium and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are uncertain. We know that artists are disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of the crisis. We also know that many people have turned to the arts, and in particular, to reading and writing, to support their mental wellbeing. The crisis has also taught a lot of us a lot of things about working more flexibly and what access to opportunities can look like – things that many of our friends with disability, from regional areas, or with caring responsibilities have been trying to tell us for years.

We write this plan in this context. With respect for the craft, passion for individual writers, and love for our community. But also with uncertainty as to how the world will look over the next three years, and a desire to make sure that the world we are building together is a world of access and inclusion, where storytellers from all backgrounds and across Victoria can flourish.

I hope you will join us.

Lucy Hamilton



"Our writers are telling Victoria's stories – its history and its future, its culture and its imagination."

Kate Larsen

The importance of writing in Victoria

The Current State

Writing contributes to a creative and prosperous Victoria. The more stories from differing perspectives that get told, the better.

Writing and reading are two of Victoria's most popular activities.

- Writers Victoria has more than 2,500 members.
- 72% of Australians aged 15 years and over read for pleasure (i.e. they read at least one book or audio book per year), and is the second most popular way that Australians engage with arts and culture. ¹
- 22% of Australians attended a book group, writers' festival or event in 2019. ²
- Engaging with writing increases our sense of wellbeing. Of readers, 61% read for relaxation/stress release. ³

Writing captures Victoria's unique heritage, culture and identity.

- Who gets published or who gets recognised in literary awards still skews to particular demographics. The First Nations and POC Writers count is underway to build more data on this, but in 2016 The Stella Prize found that only a small percentage of the women that get reviewed are women of colour. ⁴



1 The Australia Council for the Arts, 2020

2 The Australia Council for the Arts, 2020

3 The Australia Council for the Arts 'Reading the Reader' survey, 2016

4 Djed Press 2019 <https://djedpress.com/2019/06/13/first-nations-poc-writers-count/>

The importance of writing in Victoria

Our challenge

Writing contributes to social cohesion and inclusion.

- Qualitative feedback from our members and participants tells us that they can feel isolated when writing purely as a solitary activity.
- This same feedback tells us that participating in writing workshops, writers groups and other literary events create feelings of connectedness.

Writing contributes to our economy, through healthy creative industries and innovation across all businesses and industries.

- For 2016-2017, writing and its related industries contributed \$9.4bn to the Australian GDP.¹



¹ Cultural and creative activity in Australia 2008-09 and 2016-17 working paper, Department of Communications and the Arts, October 2018



Our Plan

2021-2023

Writers Victoria is Victoria's first, largest and longest-running organisation for writers.

We have the expertise and platform to support Victoria's vibrant storytelling community, to ensure writers from all of Victoria's diverse communities have the skills and support to succeed, and to advocate for support for writers and storytellers more broadly.

Our Vision

A diverse and flourishing writing community across Victoria, where a range of writers are supported and valued.

Our Mission

To support and connect writers at all stages of their development/and or career.

Our Values

Inclusion



We welcome all types of writers, no matter their genre, stage of development or location. We will engage and work with individuals from all sectors of our broad and diverse community.

Community



We develop, celebrate and give voice to our members and writers; we collaborate and build the capacity of our sector.

Participation



We are democratic and member-driven; we ask, we listen, we respond.

Innovation and excellence



We produce quality work; we lead by example.

Professionalism



We are strategic, we are resourceful, we work hard.

Respect



We take care, we are community-led.



Our Goals

Connect, support, grow



CONNECT

We will connect more writers in our vibrant storytelling community

Writers Victoria has built a strong community by connecting a broad range of Victoria's writers with each other, and with other organisations across the arts sectors.

Our goal over the next three years is to connect even more storytellers to this community, as well as to broaden the range of writers with which we are connecting.

What we will do next

- Use our various communication channels to connect our community with each other and our partners.
- Form new partnerships to continue to serve specific targeted groups of writers and connect them into our networks.
- Innovate to deliver high quality face-to-face and online activities and events that build writers' knowledge, skills and connections with each other and the sector.

How we will do it

-  Our newsletter will give our members and wider community access to a range of opportunities.
-  Provide spaces for writers' groups to meet.
-  Face-to-face initiatives, such as the Established Writers Forum, will allow writers to meet in a more casual networking setting.
-  Online initiatives, such as Live Write, will connect writers from across the country online.
-  Continue to work in partnership, and seek new partnerships, with a wide range of organisations to extend the reach of our work and also the breadth of support we can offer.
-  Publish 'The Victorian Writer' quarterly and publish on our website regularly, in order to share the work of our community more widely.

"Writers Victoria has played different roles throughout my writing career. Sometimes it has provided a space for me to meet and network with other writers. Other times it has provided reassurance that I am not alone. The Writers Victoria tutors were my readers when I didn't have the luxury of a paid editor — they reminded me of the fundamentals, they demystified the process."

Melanie Cheng

SUPPORT

We will support more writers to develop their storytelling and business skills

Writers Victoria offers an extensive platform of services for writers to develop both the craft and their businesses and audiences. Many potential writers don't start because of a lack of confidence in their skills, or don't succeed because of a lack of mentorship and business skills.

What we will do next

- Provide our high-quality professional development opportunities across both craft and business skills.
- Ensure a wider breadth of people can access our opportunities through an analysis of the ongoing barriers to access.
- Deliver our offerings a flexible and hybrid model that is adaptable both to times of uncertainty and different needs of participants.

How we will do it

-  Deliver high quality skills-development workshops.
-  Connect writers with support through our mentorship program.
-  Grow our business writing program to support the development of writing skills across a range of industries.
-  Offer low-cost studio access to writers to give them space to write.
-  Offer fellowships and travel grants to support the research and development of new works.
-  Offer manuscript assessments and spotlight services.
-  Survey our community regularly to identify and monitor barriers to access.
-  Expand the Disadvantaged Writers Fund, to remove financial barriers to accessing opportunities.

“Writers Victoria has played not an important but an essential part in my becoming a part of the Australian literary scene as a writer, teacher, mentor and blogger.”

Lee Koffman

GROW

We will grow our reach to ensure more communities are supported to tell their stories

We are the largest writers organisation in Victoria. Yet some communities are underrepresented in the writing world, either because there are barriers, or because they don't see themselves as writers. This includes writers from across regions, cultural groups, ages, abilities and lived experiences. We also know that barriers for these groups are increasing as funding for the arts declines.

Since our last strategic plan, the proportion of members that identify as CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, people with disability, and/or those that live in regional areas have increased. 62% of our members are women and 42% are from outer metro or regional areas. 9.1% are culturally and linguistically diverse, 0.33% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 5.4% are people with disability. Our goal over the next three years is to welcome even more writers into our writing community, especially those with less everyday opportunities – and to do so in a sustainable way.

What we will do next

- Culture shift so everyone in the organisation is asking who's not in the room and why.
- Advocacy to increase funding and provide an ecosystem of support for writers broadly.
- Operate sustainably with a focus both on financial sustainability and staff wellbeing.

How we will do it

-  Broaden our patron model and develop working groups with a range of voices to consult on our activities.
-  Conduct a review of our membership offering to ensure it is valued by, and welcoming to, a wide variety of Victorian writers and storytellers.
-  Deliver Writeability and Publishability, our programs targeted for Writers with disability, and broaden their impact through both offering consultation and the Writeability Goes Local program.
-  Embed existing expertise on working with writers with disability across the organisation through training on NDIS & the Arts.
-  Deliver targeted initiatives such as our commissions for women writers of colour.
-  Grow our existing partnerships to broaden our reach.
-  Seek new partnerships and develop initiatives that will support reaching other priority groups, including but not limited to, people of colour, First Nations writers, young writers, older writers, and writers from regional areas.
-  Survey staff regularly & develop relevant training programs to support the development of our team.
-  Regularly talk to government, through avenues such as the Arts Industry Council Victoria, to ensure the voices of writers are represented.

Working Together

We're grateful for the support of all the following organisations, without whom our work wouldn't be possible:



- Hazel Rowley Trust
- Deborah Cass Foundation
- National Trust
- Valid
- Arts Access Victoria
- The Wheeler Centre
- Express Media
- Melbourne Writers Festival
- Emerging Writers Festival
- Small Press Network
- Australian Poetry
- National Writers Centre Network
- Arts Industry Council Victoria
- Australian Communities Foundation

And our many individual members, donors and supporters.

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