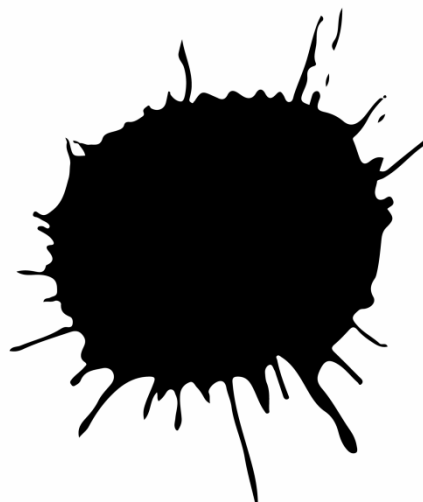


**HUNTER
WRITERS
CENTRE**



Annual Report 2014

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ABN 44 903 609 935

From the President

Hunter Writers Centre (HWC), established in 1995, is the region's leading literary centre committed to developing and supporting the artistic and professional development of aspiring, emerging and established writers.

Our activities reflect our core membership and the communities from which they come and, additionally, marginalised groups in our community. Our quality programs aim to encourage aspiring writers, support and inform emerging writers and celebrate established writers. And through our programs we acknowledge literature as essential to the wellbeing and creative development of our community.

In collaboration with professional writers, publishers and academics during 2014, HWC delivered a variety of unique opportunities for writers to participate in workshops, writing groups, literary competitions, professional development and networking events.

All forms of writing, from prose and poetry to fiction and non-fiction, business writing, children's, young adult and adult genres, were explored by a diverse range of people.

Our accessible and unique resources cultivate, foster and inspire Newcastle and the Hunter region's rich literary culture, providing opportunities and assisting in the development of literature for all people regardless of age, ability, background or location.

Thanks goes to our Director, Karen Crofts who has worked tirelessly to develop, manage and promote the organisation, its programs and staff and for her vision and drive to keep HWC as the leading literary organisation in the Hunter region. I'd also like to thank her for her confidence in me as President. Our committee has undergone changes over the course of the year and we have acquired some very talented Board members with very valuable skills who make a terrific contribution to the committee. I'd like to acknowledge these volunteers and the ongoing dedication of Ted (Secretary), Sandra (Treasurer), Matthew Griffin and Lee Jones.

Thanks also to Justine Potter who, as Business Systems Manager, developed and delivered the initial stages of the HWC Policy and Procedure Manual and also to our supportive administrative, competition and event staff to whom we are hugely grateful.

2014 was a year to be proud of and we hope it continues with the support of our community, supporters, stakeholders and local and state governments.

Megan Buxton

From the Director

In 2014, HWC engaged the community to achieve our central goal to be a regional writer's centre with a national perspective.

For our emerging writers across the Hunter, we inspired a passion for literature through our successful newcomer's programs, cross-medium linkages and direct-instruction workshops.

We provided and cultivated an inclusive, supportive and accessible environment of specialised workshops, writing groups, live readings and writing competitions which engaged local writers and hundreds further afield. In 2014, our reach extended across the country with the renowned Newcastle Poetry Prize and the Grieve Writing Competition which boasted entrants from every state and territory.

Newcastle is home to many award winning and established writers and we continued to provide access to professional expertise and advice, employment opportunities through workshop facilitation, book launch promotion and introductions to unique publishing opportunities.

Throughout the year, our members were consulted and engaged in the development of new literary programs which provided a sustainable environment for the organisation with continuous assessment and improvement of policies, procedures and practices.

Thank you to all HWC members, the staff, committee and volunteers, who have helped make 2014 one of the most successful and enjoyable in my tenure as Director.

Karen Crofts



Our Community

Our members come from all walks of literary life - journalists, bloggers, poets, reviewers, children's authors, media consultants, editors, publishers . . . the list goes on. The Hunter has a high number of individuals with unique expertise and experience in the traditional and non-traditional literary fields and HWC's membership is a manifestation of the diversity of our community.

Our regular writing groups and live readings provide collegial support between members and a strong professional support to newcomers. They offer members an opportunity to share completed works with an audience which builds an understanding and appreciation of prose and poetry and attracts new aspiring writers. This community supports writers to share their work and reduces the isolation often felt in the solitary pursuit of writing.

We also provide access to high quality resources through our website, monthly e-newsletters which include national and local initiatives, opportunities and our mentoring program. We promote members' achievements and offer other unique publishing opportunities. We provide information about all aspects of writing and publishing to maintain a quality of training and ethics in the profession and pursuit of writing. We provide resources and networking opportunities for writers and increase writer visibility by including on our website an ever growing library of books by members and our own locally published anthologies. All this for only \$40 membership per year!

Our Community Leaders

The HWC elected committee for 2014/15 succeeded the outgoing committee and continued to govern and oversee the organisational Strategic Plan and Business Plan for 2014 -17. This included implementing the newly developed Communications Strategy and the planning of a Sponsorship Strategy. The HWC committee is a dedicated group of volunteers who are committed to building diverse audiences for the centre, improving engagement with local community, building greater awareness of the craft of writing and grow the appreciation for literature across the Hunter region.

Hunter Writers Centre Committee 2014

2013/14

Carolyn Martinez - President
Alex Spathis - President
Alison Walter - Treasurer
Tony Gabites - Treasurer
Andrew Clarke - Secretary
Jenny Blackford
Wendy Gunthorpe
Justine Potter

2014/15

Megan Buxton - President
Sandra Ognibene -Treasurer
Ted Bassingthwaite - Secretary
Matthew Griffin
Lee Jones
Jillian Sims
Alex Spathis
Alexander Wheeler

Partnerships

In 2014, HWC continued to work locally, regionally and nationally to encourage a broad participation of writing at all levels and to advocate for Hunter region writers by acknowledging the economic, creative and social impact of writing and literature.

Strong partnerships helped to build our community and increase brand awareness of the organisation. In 2014 we built on existing and forged new partnerships with other arts, non-arts organisations and individuals to ensure the standard of program was maintained and there was an increase in awareness and appreciation of the art of writing and literature across the community.

We forged new and dynamic relationships with a number of organisations in the health, mental health, palliative care and grief and loss services sectors to launch the first national Grieve Writing Competition. The competition had been conducted in-house to members only in 2013 but sponsorship and the interest shown by entrants encouraged us to take the project further. We were thrilled when 550 writers sent submitted stories and poems in the first year.

HWC moved from The Lock Up Cultural Centre (now **The Lock-Up**), to the **Newcastle Region Library Services** to align our literary programs. This partnership was a significant one in maximising the opportunities for readers and writers across four local government areas to access to high quality literary programs and to broaden the reach of HWC activities.

Our successful Writers-in-Residence program in partnership with The Lock-Up Cultural Centre provided the opportunity for a large audience - high profile event to build awareness as well as supporting the professional development of literature and sharing of expertise. In 2014 our guest writer-in-residence was Ramona Koval who spoke about her life as a literary commentator and Book Show host as well as a life as a reader.

The existing valuable partnership with The **University of Newcastle** was strengthened in 2014 through the Newcastle Poetry Prize, and the establishment of a specialised opportunity for a design postgraduate student to typeset and design the anthology for the prize. Our collaboration with UoN supports our commitment to community engagement and support for connections with literary programs and opportunities around the region.

After a successful inaugural festival in 2013 in which HWC played a pivotal strategic and artistic role, in 2014 HWC provided valuable resources, information and unique promotion during the **Newcastle Writers Festival** which built a progressive professional interaction between the two organisations.

We worked closely with local independent book store, McLeans to offer discounts for HWC members and supported other independent local literary groups and initiatives to foster a passion for literature with professional advice, support and resources.

With our mission to cultivate, support and sustain an inclusive thriving literary community, HWC strengthened its relationship with **Octapod's** Creative Access Network by hosting a creative workshop and discussion for people with disabilities and people interested in inclusive literary practice.

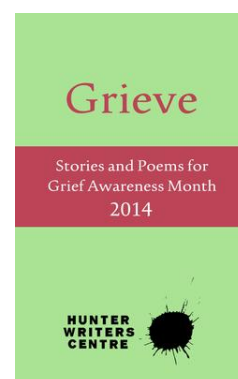
National Reach

Grieve Writing Competition 2014

The Grieve Writing Competition was again run in 2014 as part of Grief Awareness Month in November. This highly successful HWC initiative of engaging broad mainstream interaction with prose writing was aimed at promoting the expertise and talents of regional literary activities to a national audience. HWC forged new and exciting partnerships with the health sector, attracted over 550 competition entries from around Australia and hosted a stirring Live Read attended by over 250 audience members.

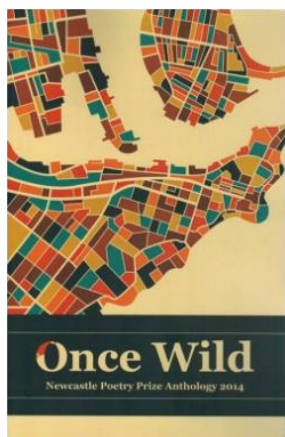
The high profile and experienced judges selected over 80 short stories and poems which were published by HWC in a special anthology and made available to all entries, supporters and dignitaries involved in the project.

Grief accompanies many of life's experiences: saying goodbye at the airport, trying to understand suicide, loss of mobility, loss of a baby, loss of a hoped for future. These are just some of the experiences that can bring emptiness, a sense of futility, darkness and pain. And these are some of life's experiences described in this book. By reading these stories and poems a little of the darkness may be lifted, some of the pain alleviated.



Newcastle Poetry Prize 2014 And a Celebration of Poetry

The Newcastle Poetry Prize is Australia's leading poetry competition. HWC has developed a self-sustaining business model for the Poetry Prize which includes a partnership with and contributions from the University of Newcastle. A hard copy anthology was again published in 2014 which, in a literary scene of shrinking publishing opportunities for poets, offered an important contribution to the nation's literary landscape.



The Newcastle Poetry Prize is one of Australia's oldest and most distinguished literary prizes celebrating 33 years in 2014. A \$20,000 prize pool is awarded by the University of Newcastle and presented to the winning poets at a glamorous high profile event. The top 30 poems were selected by the judges Mark Tredinnick and Ann Kerdijk-Nicholson and compiled into an anthology.

Other distinguished local poets were celebrated through live reads and networking events throughout the weekend.

'Just a quick note to say thank you so much for a wonderfully memorable launch on Friday night, and for a thrilling celebration of the Newcastle Poetry Prize at the festival on Saturday. You worked magic on both occasions, keeping the events sparkling and on track.' Jean Kent, 8 April 2014

Thank you to the Newcastle Poetry Prize sponsor:



State Wide Reach

Travel Writing Competition 2014

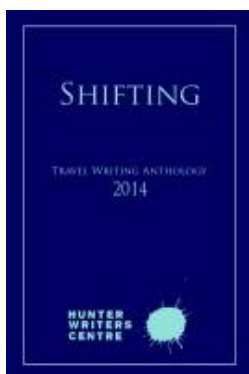
Open to entrants from all over New South Wales, the HWC Travel Writing Competition was judged by *Destination Saigon* author Walter Mason and highlighted some outstanding stories from around the globe. Walter Mason also hosted the 'Travel Writing With Spirit Workshop' which was attended by twenty passionate and aspiring travel writers who gave wonderful feedback:

I loved Walter's workshop as it encouraged a different approach to writing – was refreshing and not too technical.

I most enjoyed Walter's engaging and relaxed presentation, his constant stream of ideas, his balance between tasks and discussion.



Walter Mason



Walter was also the judge of our Travel Writing competition and attended our live reading (above right) at The Unorthodox Church of Groove at Hamilton. An e-anthology was published by HWC and boasts the 40 top entrants to the 2014 Travel Writing Competition.

Thank you to Crowne Plaza who donated first prize and Kathmandu who awarded second prize.

Local Programs, Connections and Support

Writer in Residence 2014



Ramona Koval

Ramona Koval is a writer, journalist and broadcaster and accepted the 2014 HWC Writer-in-Residence-Program at The Lock Up Cultural Centre during January. She is the editor of Best Australian Essays, was the presenter of ABC Radio National's 'The Book Show' for many years and now interviews writers for The Monthly's online book club.

A Conversation with Ramona was also hosted by HWC Director, Karen Crofts. They discussed Ramona's book *By the Book*. This warm, bright, erudite speaker had the audience spellbound as she talked about love and science, about arctic exploration, about poetry and travel and falling in love.

Workshop Program

In 2014 our workshop program offered education on specialised areas of writing to build writers skills and appreciation of the wide range of literary pathways for writers as well as continued to run the successful and well attended workshop program for adults and young writers aged 9-18 years.

We promoted and published a mix of visual, audio and mixed media creative works and content on our website and writers of all ages were able to showcase their work online as creators, participants and audience members as part of the local literary community. We also explored possibilities of alternative methods of publishing accessible to people with disability interested in creating, participating and being audiences to literary expression.



Theatrette, City library, the location of most of our workshops

Here are some of the Workshop highlights of the year:



Writing for Children with Pamela Freeman

Award winning author Pamela Freeman gave an overview of writing not only for children but also how to create fantasy worlds that inspire and delight. Pamela advises: "Structure is all important: your beginning should only be 5% for children, no more than 10% in adult books. Then plot point 1 occurs where the character changes."

Autobiographical Fiction with Joanna Atherfold-Finn

Joanna has had short stories and articles published in anthologies and journals and she was runner-up in the Carmel Bird Short Fiction Award. She is currently completing a PhD in creative writing and is working on a volume of autobiographical short fiction. Participants drafted a piece of writing that merged memory with fictional elements to explore the transformative nature of the genre.

Blogging and Social Media with Linda Drummond, Ruth Cotton and Jazz Andrews

Local bloggers shared their expertise on questions such as: Do you want to start a blog? What to write about? Who will read it? How do you build a community of followers? How can facebook and twitter extend your profile?

*Great mix of panelists. Perfect balance of speakers and Q&A - Kim
Really helpful. I really liked that panelists were all local - Liz*

Marketing your Book with Robert Watson

This was a highly successful workshop run by a professional author coach with a strong background in business and strategy. Robert supported writers who haven't started to write their book yet, authors whose books were substantially written and authors who have unsold copies of their book(s).

Life Writing with Patti Miller

Patti Miller is well known for her Life Writing workshops and delivered a superb workshop which inspired and supported those interested in autobiography, memoir, travel and sojourn writing, narrative non-fiction, biography and even the personal essay

Time after time, the thousands of Life Stories I have read and worked on reveal that each individual being is miraculous and unique, and that at the same time we share so much as we travel throughout lives.

Patti Miller



World Building with Kate Forsyth

Kate Forsyth wrote her first novel at the age of seven, and is now the internationally bestselling and award-winning author of thirty books, ranging from picture books to poetry to novels for both adults and children. She was recently voted one of Australia's Favourite 20 Novelists, and has been called 'one of the finest writers of this generation'.

and writing workshops for our regional Young Writers



Writing Groups

Writing groups are a wonderful way to encourage individual sharing of information, support and talent. HWC promotes the success and achievements of the following groups:

Poetry facilitated by Kathryn Fry where participants took an original poem for workshopping at each session. The atmosphere was supportive and the feedback constructive.

Children's Writing with Katrina McKelvey provided a comfortable environment where honest and thoughtful feedback was given. This feedback led to some group members gaining success in children's writing competitions during 2014.

Blogging with Ruth Cotton - blogs on topics as diverse as bicycles in Newcastle, book reviews, lifestyle, polka dots, rabbits, Hamilton history and the flourishing West End of Newcastle!

Book Groups

Two book groups continued to run throughout 2014 with critical and dynamic facilitated discussions around techniques authors use to appeal to readers.

Giving to the Community

Diverse Communities

HWC supports diverse communities to engage in writing and literature pursuits with targeted programs for marginalised groups throughout the year. In 2014, we supported a literary program in partnership with City of Newcastle, for senior citizens as part of Seniors Festival

We also offered our judging and consultancy advice to the YWCA's 'She: True Stories' writing competition.



Anthony Wood and Joanna Atherfold Finn - members of HWC and winners of the She: True Stories Writing Competition

HWC members won all the places in this competition which was open to any writer with a connection to a woman of Newcastle:
<http://shetruestories.org/>

HWC member Anthony Wood:

<https://soundcloud.com/1233newcastle/she-anthony-wood-air>

HWC member Morgan Bell:

<https://soundcloud.com/1233newcastle/she-morgan-bell-air>

HWC member Karen Eastwood:

<https://soundcloud.com/1233newcastle/she-karen-eastwood-air>

HWC director Karen Crofts:

<https://soundcloud.com/1233newcastle/she-karen-crofts-air>

Mentorship Program

HWC launched its unique Writers Mentorship Program with positive feedback:

I have to say this was a great experience - one I really enjoyed. Fiona was great and felt it had been very helpful as well. So, many congrats on that initiative. I know you guys aren't making anything out of it - but it's a fabulous service - and very, very good value for the member. I wish there'd been something like this when I was first getting published a trillion years ago. Kerri Lane, HWC Mentor and Children's author

Publications, launches and readings supported by HWC

A Slow Combusting Hymn: Poetry from and about Newcastle and the Hunter Region, edited by Kit Kelen and Jean Kent, is a comprehensive record of the Hunter Region and its current poets.

The sixty-four contributors are all residents of the region and the majority are members HWC. HWC director donated funds to the publication of the anthology.

Poetry in the Pub was supported by HWC through regular readings and a published anthology.

Some more interesting facts from 2014...

- * Workshop attendance was full to capacity at our venue – the theatrette, Newcastle City Library
- * Grieve Writing Competition entries increased from 150 to 550
- * Membership doubled on 2013
- * Facebook engagement increased by 30%
- * Twitter was established with 450 followers by the end of 2014

Thank you



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