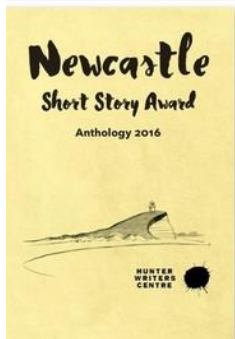


Hunter Writers Centre

2016 Annual Report



2016 opened with our new national writing competition – the **Newcastle Short Story Award**. Judges were Glensys Osborne and Michael Sala. We were thrilled when the competition closed having received



hundreds of entries as this was the inaugural year. This enabled us to approach UoN to sponsor the award for 2017-2019 inclusive. In its first year the prize money came from the business community and our cash reserves from past years. Hunter businesses all reported that they were pleased with the process and outcomes and returned for 2017.

The anthology has sold all copies but 10 and the ebook launched later in 2016.

Newcastle City Council generously supported the project with a \$3000 CAP grant which covered judges' fees.

Our Sponsors and Supporters



The **Grieve** writing project saw another successful year. Although entries did not increase they remained the same number as 2015. We employed a dedicated poetry judge in Jean Kent as 50% of entries were poems. The recipient of the largest prize was Julie Watts from Perth with her poem 'Calvary'.

We were very excited to expand our partnerships to include specialised organisations from the grief and loss industry: SIDS for Kids, Lifeline, Alzheimers Australia, and funeral services. All prior partners from previous years returned.



Sue Pieters-Hawke was our celebrity for the project with her connection to Alzheimers. She was excellent although it did not result in increased entries or attendance at the live reading in August so we won't pursue the engagement of a celebrity in future. The Grieve panel at the writers' festival was well attended.

The Director thanks the HWC board for all their support in 2016 particularly with the events relating to our activities – prize ceremonies, live readings, book launches. The HWC board is a dedicated, wonderful team to work for and with and the staff look forward to working with you in the coming years. Annual report continued overleaf . . .



The 35th **Newcastle Poetry Prize** attracted the same number of entrants as 2015 whilst total entry numbers decreased. This meant poets were entering less poems into the NPP but we are still maintaining the same level of individual engagement with the poets of Australia. The drop in entries is likely a result of more high paying poetry competitions entering the market so poets spread their poems around competitions. The anthology sold 70 copies plus 30 given free. The university increased the prize money such that first prize became \$15 000. Three local poets were selected for publication in the anthology. All are HWC members. Pictured: John Watson, winner, Newcastle Poetry Prize



Workshops in 2016 covered topics such as Extension Creative Writing, Blogging, Memoir, Reviewing, Poetry and Non-Fiction writing. Our partnerships with Maitland libraries and Lake Macquarie libraries resulted in HWC presenting workshops on short story writing, extension creative writing and poetry across the region in locations across the Hunter including East Maitland, Maitland, Speers Point, Toronto, Belmont and Charlestown. It was excellent to see members of HWC perform the role of tutors in 2016

Writing Groups in Poetry and Children's Writing continued and by the end of 2016 were full. Second groups to be formed for each genre in 2017. Prose group met for a series of 6 weeks twice in 2016.

Live Readings. These began in 2013 at a suitable venue in Newcastle East but when it was sold we struggled to find a replacement. We began monthly live readings again in Oct 2016 at the director's home and as the numbers steadily rose we moved the monthly event to Adamstown Uniting Church 'The Dungeon'. This is currently a members-only event.

Read, Write, Love

We introduced the opportunity to be published in 2016 and established *Read, Write, Love*. An online publication of works around the theme of Love by members of HWC. It is planned to publish this collection in 2017.

Catchfire Press Home is the Hunter and the **Newcastle Herald** both requested the director of HWC judge their short story competitions. Many members entered and



were shortlisted. In 2016 we again sponsored the **Newcastle Writers Festival** and the **Real Film Festival**

Special Literary Project of 2016

Each year HWC promotes, supports and oversees a special literary project part-funded by ArtsNSW. In 2014 poetry was the focus; in 2015 a cluster of literary Inclusion projects were organised culminating in International Day for People with a Disability Live Reading and on air radio program. In **2016** our literary focus was on employing our members to write the life stories of champion sailors of the Hunter region. As the Rio Olympics were in 2016 some sailors were unreachable so interviews and life stories were completed in 2017. Subject sailors included:

- Tom Addis – Sydney-Hobart champion + Volvo Ocean Racer – life story written by HWC member Peter Wells
- Leisl Tesch – Paralympic Gold Medallist (Sailing) - life story written by HWC member Maree Gallop
- Jacqueline Ellis – Former world laser radial champion and Australian champion - life story written by HWC member Holly Bruce
- Allyn & Danielle Ovenden – Champion racers and round-the-world cruisers - life story written by HWC member Megan Buxton
- Cherylle Stone – Hobi-cat finalists and Circumnavigators of Australia - life story written by HWC member Patricia Green

Staffing

Louise Woo left us in 2016 and was replaced by Morgan Bell who focused the PR/marketing role on social media.

Karen Eastwood transferred from being Inclusion officer in 2015 to Competitions Co-ordinator in 2016

HWC employed a dedicated members' co-ordinator, Cara Nightingale, towards the end of 2016 as membership had not increased in 2016 beyond 2015 as it had in previous years.

See comment in relation to staffing in Financial Assessment below

Office and workshop space

After an excellent MOU with the libraries through 2015 involving provision to HWC of an office and use of the theatrette space in return for the healthy numbers of HWC attendees added to library numbers, there was a change to our arrangements such that we had to leave the library and it was six months before we could settle on a new MOU. It was disappointing to see the original MOU be altered to the degree that it has been. We now provide 40+ hours of HWC members' and staff time to library projects in exchange for workshop space 3 times a month and no office. This is the arrangement in 2017. To be reviewed beyond that year.

Report from the Treasurer:

Hunter Writers Centre realised a net loss of \$5,788 in 2016.

2016 revenue was strong with a 3% increase against 2015 primarily driven by healthy competition entry fees and receipt of prize money.

Expenses, however, grew at 27% compared with 2015 which was a result of higher employment costs, as we invest in future growth opportunities and reflect the work commitments of paid employees and match salaries with market rates. Administration costs were also higher driven by depreciation not being recognised in 2015 financial statements, higher insurance premiums and higher merchant fees due to higher competition entry numbers.

All-in-all, a good result in 2016, however we need to remain focused on future opportunities as we look to increase our membership base and competition numbers in 2017.

Director's comment on end of year financial results

2014 and 2015 both ended with very healthy surplus finances of \$15 000 and \$20 000 respectively. 2016 ended with a \$5000 **loss**. Wages rose \$19 000 in 2016 on the previous year. When one considers this is approx. the amount made as surplus in 2015 one can understand why income is the main element in contributing towards the 2016 small loss. Prior to 2016, the director was working well in excess of paid hours so hiring specialised staff in 2016 to carry out various tasks previously co-ordinated by the director (competitions, marketing and caretaking of members) was a more appropriate management of operations. The financial reports show that 3 national competitions in the year, membership in excess of 250 plus consistent book sales and workshop program uptake are all required to ensure continued financial viability of Hunter Writers Centre.