

HUNTER
WRITERS
CENTRE



ANNUAL REPORT 2012

After reading this report we hope you are inspired to

- Become a member
- Donate
- Offer your services to our board or programs

Our sponsors:



Our supporters:



www.hunterwriterscentre.com
newcastlepoetryprize.com
hunterwriterscentre@gmail.com

 hunterwriterscentre

 HunterWritersC

Tel. 49263485

Hunter Writers Centre Inc. was established in 1995 and incorporated in 1998. As a graduate of the masters degree program in Creative Writing from The University of Newcastle, I have always believed Hunter Writers Centre can be the professional association for writers in our region. Whether you write at home, study writing formally, or you are a published writer, there should be a professional body to represent your interests, bring legitimacy to your writing and maintain standards of training and ethics in the profession of writing. Through our workshops, regular groups, various publishing opportunities and collegiality with relevant organisations and individuals we strive to update skills, inform and unite all writers.

2012 was a year of hard but very satisfying work as we saw the centre develop the profile it deserves in Newcastle. Previous directors, Katharine Gillett and Brian Joyce, laid the strong membership foundation upon which we have built an engaged and vibrant community of writers at all levels of experience.

Our membership doubled in 2012 on the previous year and many of those members are active in our programs and activities. Writers are a loyal, dedicated and sincere mob and it has been a privilege and delight to support you.

Karen Crofts
Director

Hunter Writers Centre Inc. supports writing and literature in Newcastle and the Hunter region, and is a key body in the development of the region's literary culture. Each year it runs poetry and prose workshops, writing groups, writing courses and book groups, and undertakes other activities, including an active schools program. It offers support to writers at all levels, from beginners to established professionals.

Hunter Writers Centre Inc. administers the annual Newcastle Poetry Prize, recognized as one of the most important literary prizes in Australia. It works in partnership with the University of Newcastle which provides the prize money of over \$20,000. Since its inception in 1981, this prize has been won by some of Australia's leading poets, and it is crucial to Newcastle's presence on the Australian and international literary calendar.

Russell Blackford
Chair

Thank you to the many people who support or dedicate themselves to the craft we represent: **Writing**

- All the members of HWC: fiction writers, poets, children's authors, essayists, writing students, memoirists, journalists, business and non-fiction writers.
- HWC Staff: Hollie Pich, Irena Daley, Candice Ward, Vesna McMaster
- Volunteers: Mark Liston, Wendy Gunthorpe, Lucy Woollard and all the Board Members: Russell Blackford, Jill McKeowen, Jenny Blackford, Reeze Dryden, Anne Brown, Louise Berry, Greg Hall and Catherine Mahony
- Justine Potter for assistance preparing this report
- University of Newcastle staff Jane Sharpe and Deputy Vice Chancellor Kevin McConkey and Andrew Parfitt. Vice Chancellor Caroline McMillen and Prof John Germov for your support of the Newcastle Poetry Prize.
- Tim Owen MP, Member for Newcastle
- Drs Kim Cheng Boey and Jennifer Harrison: 2012 judges, Newcastle Poetry Prize
- The Lock-Up Cultural Centre staff and board for the AIR program 2012
- Rosemarie Milson, journalist, and Chad Watson, Editor, The Newcastle Herald
- Mardi Ryan, Cultural Development Officer, NCC, for all your support
- Maclean's Booksellers for continuing to offer a 10% discount to our members.
- ABC 1233, especially morning presenter Jill Emberson
- James Stevenson for publishing our anthologies as ebooks
- Wendy Gunthorpe and Lucy Woollard – volunteers
- Josh Croft , social media advice
- Don Thompson, Auditor
- Newcastle City Library staff including Carol Edmonds
- Chris Tola, Newcastle City Council
- Newcastle Regional Museum especially Julie Baird and Dianne Taylor
- Kim-Cherie Davidson, Editor, The Star Newspaper
- Newcastle NOW staff

**HUNTER
WRITERS
CENTRE**



Nikki Gemmell Writer-in-Residence

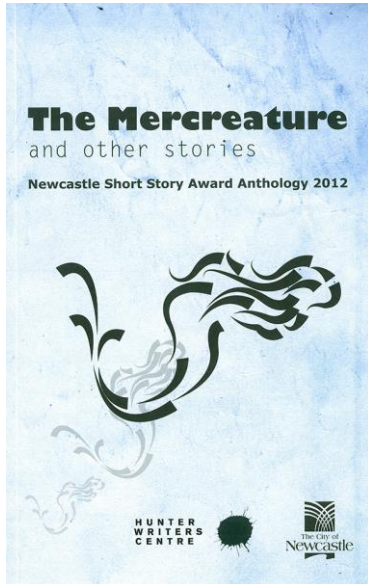
2012 opened to our 'Conversation' with author Nikki Gemmell. Our ongoing partnership with the Lock-Up Cultural Centre resulted in Nikki being offered a writer-in-residence opportunity in January 2012. Over 80 attended the Exercise Yard of the Lock-Up and this was Hunter Writers Centre opening membership drive for our organisation.



<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books>



HWC member and author Kerri Lane with Nikki Gemmell



The Newcastle Short Story Award

was underway when our doors opened in 2012. Funded by a grant from Newcastle City Council and HWC co-ordinated the competition. Ryan O'Neill and Marion Halligan were the judges. Over 150 entries were received – a terrific response from the Hunter/Central Coast regions in the inaugural year of the award. 10 stories made the shortlist and the anthology (*left*) was prepared for publication. The launch of the anthology and prize night was held at the Lovett Gallery, Newcastle City Library. Over 100 were in attendance and the competition was considered a huge success with double the expected entries.



Over 80 anthologies were sold on the night and continue to sell steadily. Thank you to Mardi Ryan, Cultural Development Officer at Newcastle City Council for her partnership on this project. *image:* The Newcastle Herald social pages featuring attendees at the Newcastle Short Story Award Prize night



Book Launches

In March 2012, 2 local authors launched their books at Hunter Writers Centre:

Michael Sala's 'The Last Thread' was launched in the Exercise Yard and over 50 were in attendance. Launched by Keri Glastonbury from the University of Newcastle Creative Writing Department, Sala's book went on to win the Pacific Region Commonwealth Book Prize in 2013.



Magdalena Ball launched her book 'Black Cow' at Hunter Writers Centre. Launched by Judy Johnson. Magdalena Ball has been a long term member of Hunter Writers Centre, has given advice and support to our programs and runs the distinguished Book Review website The Compulsive Reader.



Significant HWC promotion February-March:

- HWC staff and board held **HWC promotion days** at Newcastle City Library and at the Newcastle City Farmers' Markets.
- The new facebook site was launched: facebook.com/hunterwriterscentre Where workshops, competitions and celebrations of local achievements are announced. By end 2012 there were 280 friends. Assessment shows that facebook and email yield memberships or bookings at a ratio of 50/50.
- The new website was built www.hunterwriterscentre.com including an online bookshop for the sale of our anthologies
- A 'members only' section was included in the website where a wide range of resources is stored for members' only access. Regular newsletters are also posted there.



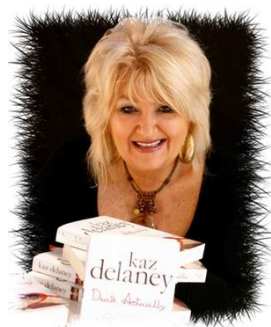
Workshops 2012

Blogging Workshop - Rebecca Olive was the second writer offered a residency at the Lock-Up Cultural Centre in partnership with Hunter Writers Centre. Rebecca ran a blogging workshop, did some media about her residency, surf culture, gender and writing studies and wrote all about her stay on her popular blog: *Making Friends with the Neighbours*. We recorded an interview with Rebecca about blogging and launched our HWC youtube channel with her interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/HunterWriters>



Rebecca's Blogging workshop was the first of our **Workshop Programs for 2012**. All workshops held in 2012 were booked out, some with a waiting list.



June 2012 Writing for Children

A whole day workshop presented by children's and YA author Kerri Lane (also known as Kaz Delaney). Kerri outlined what works and doesn't work when keeping children engaged and she de-bunked many myths. The industry information was invaluable as were the handouts and the individual workshopping she offered the attendees.

Feedback:

A very worthwhile day - tons of information which was well presented. Kerri was excellent. - Burt
Great presentation and well organised. The workshop had a great pace! So much valuable information about the logistics of writing as well as lots of inside information about the industry - Tamara

Engaging, interesting presenter with a wealth of knowledge on the subject. Thanks! – Tracey

July 2012 Creative Non-Fiction Workshop – presented by Mark Tredinnick



35 people attended Mark Tredinnick's **Creative Non-Fiction workshop**. Held at City Hall, Tredinnick discussed creative non-fiction through clarification of the personal essay, concentrating on developing the voice on the page and determining who the 'I' is in first person writing.

August 2012 Oral Histories Workshop



at Newcastle Regional Museum

HWC Director of HWC, Karen Crofts, approached Julie Baird, deputy curator of Newcastle Regional Museum and Dianne Taylor, oral histories consultant, to conduct a workshop covering the ethical and professional standards in oral history gathering. Since this workshop, our writers have started to collect oral histories some of which may become part of the museum's oral history collection.

Feedback:

I found the oral history meeting invigorating and informative - about processes, equipment and ideas for oral histories. Dianne was a knowledgeable leader and it was great to hear that the museum is interested in Newcastle social histories. – Jude

September 2012 E-book publishing – presented by Candice Ward

3 hour course covering: preparing your book; formats and file conversion; publishing your book; book cover; merchandising and sales; linking with a print edition, lending, excerpts, sales and tax.

October Reviewing Course – presented by Magdalena Ball

Magdalena Ball runs the popular Compulsive Reader website where reviews, interviews and background about books is provided. HWC asked Magdalena to run a course on Reviewing covering books, music, food and film.

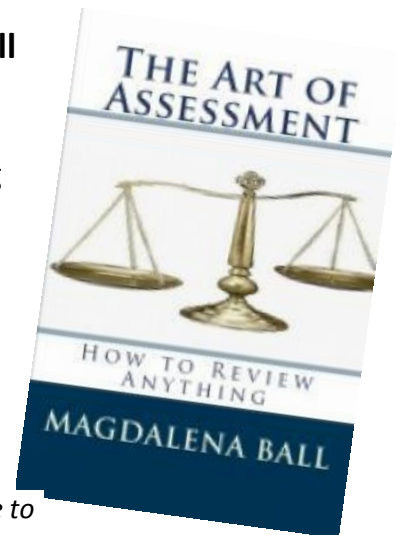
Feedback:

I really enjoyed the course and am inspired to take up reviewing more seriously as a result. I'd thought it would have been a harder area to break into but Magdalena's assurances have given me the impetus to go for it. Her offer to publish some reviews if they're good enough is also encouraging and a good way to get a foothold. - Sheree

Magdalena was energetic, interesting and gave me very useful info. I hope to start writing reviews soon - Mark

Thoroughly enjoyed Magdalena's course...I can see myself doing more reviews and enjoying the process - Marilyn

I found the workshop stimulating and useful. Another great HWC event. And thanks for the free books. - Jude



Regular writing groups. Ongoing throughout the year

A survey of members at the end of 2012 revealed that regular writing groups and workshops are the most favoured activities for members. At HWC we offer 2 poetry groups, 2 book groups, 2 prose groups and a group dedicated to writing books for children.

2012 Young Writers

Creative Writing programs have been conducted in these schools:

Macquarie College
St Philips College
Hunter Valley Grammar School
Swansea High School
Newcastle High School
Merewether High School
Whitebridge High School
Gloucester High School
Jesmond Public School
Hamilton South Public School
Hunter School of the Performing Arts



Stories by Young Writers are sometimes selected for publication at <http://www.hunterstorytellers.com> – a site dedicated to promoting writing by young people in the Hunter region.

3 free workshops in schools were also offered as a partnership promotion with the National Young Writers Festival, a sub-festival of TiNA. We also ran an online story competition, prizes awarded by Macleans Booksellers.



(Right) Writing in different coloured pen gets you out of 'school mode' and aids imagination.

Feedback:

*I liked writing different types of stories. I learnt a lot about detailing a story. **Michael***

*I got great information from the program. I enjoyed learning how to construct a good short story. **Niko***

*I most enjoyed the 3 sentence short story exercise. The program was fun and educational. **Tori***

*I enjoyed learning about new ways of writing, to write from the heart and edit later. It was really helpful. I would like to do this again. **Lucy***

*It forced me to write in ways I wouldn't usually and I liked it. **Elanor***



2012 The Newcastle Poetry Prize

Co-ordinator, 2012: Candice Ward

Report prepared by Candice Ward and Karen Crofts

The Newcastle Poetry Prize continues to be the most prestigious poetry prize in the country, drawing hundreds of entries Australia-wide.

The 2012 annual award night was a highlight on the literary calendar, as the winners of the Prize were kept secret until the announcement. The Hunter Writers Centre administered the award, coordinating the prize giving and publishing the annual NPP anthology, a collection of the top twenty-three entries as judged by a panel of esteemed poets.

Publication in the anthology has launched many a career, as the NPP is judged blind, providing a level playing field where existing reputations are confirmed and emerging talent has the chance to break through. The prize's name confirms Newcastle as an established centre for cultural excellence.

The Prize exists largely through the generous support of the University of Newcastle, which provided \$20,000 in prize money.

Key achievements in 2012

- A healthy number of entries – 431
- Strong local participation – 12%
- The digitisation of the entry system
- Creating an eBook version of the annual anthology for distribution on Amazon.com
- A smoothly run award night attended by approximately 80 poets, dignitaries and interested public, with representation from other states including Victoria
- A successful PR internship with a University of Newcastle student
- The participation of a local judge, Kim Cheng Boey, University of Newcastle Creative Writing lecturer

The Newcastle Poetry Prize is the only poetry prize associated with place (ie there is no Melbourne or Sydney poetry prize). Often referred to as 'The Newcastle', the community should be proud of its long literary history and the ability to sustain what is Australia's longest running and most prestigious poetry award.



Number of participants

431 entries were received in 2012. This was slightly up on previous years and is attributed to the two-pronged promotional plan, which focused both on the local Hunter community and the Australian poetry community at large. 12% of the total entries were local, with 52 local poets entering the national prize.

Award night

The prize night, held on October 26 at Newcastle City Hall, attracted approximately 80 dignitaries, shortlisted poets and local community members with a large proportion of shortlisted attendees travelling from Melbourne.

Annual anthology

2012's annual anthology was entitled 'Coastline' after the winning entry by David Musgrave (right). Hunter Writers Centre printed 250 copies of the annual hardcopy edition which was funded by Newcastle City Council. The anthology was launched during the prize night and remaining copies are being sold through hunterwriterscentre.com/shop



Volunteers

HWC utilised the assistance of 6 volunteers who collectively put approximately 110 hours into the coordination of the NPP, under the direction of the NPP Coordinator. The majority of the volunteer work was done by our UoN PR intern who contributed 80 hours as part of her third year PR subject work placement program. This was a valuable partnership for both the student, who was able to apply her university learning to a real world situation, and HWC, who benefited from an extra helping hand.

Newcastle Poetry Prize partners

In 2012 the Newcastle Poetry Prize partners were the University of Newcastle and Newcastle City Council.

Successes and Benefits

The NPP received strong media coverage in the leadup to entries opening. Trisha Pender, who was the previous year's Local Category winner appeared on ABC 1233. This was also the year our entry system went fully online which streamlined and modernised the entry process. Exposure of the Hunter Writers' Centre to a national audience and involvement in a significant literary event.

Challenges experienced

A significant challenge we experienced was the tightness of our budget. We ended up with a surplus of approximately \$300. Funds are generated solely through entry fees and we do not know until entries close in June whether we will have enough to cover the expenses we've already incurred promoting the event to potential entrants.

How was the project received by participants

Positive feedback received :

'Thanks for a great night on Friday! One for the memory' ~ Philip Radmall, entrant

'Congrats on doing a hard job very well' ~ Mark Liston, Newcastle poet

'Congratulations on a wonderful evening, it was well worth the effort to travel from Melbourne to be part of it' ~ Gita Mammen, entrant

"It proves that there is poetry in money after all, that a major prize like the Newcastle Poetry Prize can call into being poems that seem to say something that has never been said before, or say something that we all know in such new and memorable ways that it reads like a new knowledge, a new sense of future."

Jennifer Harrison and Kim Cheng Boey, 2012 judges

2012 Media focus on HWC activities:



- **The Newcastle Short Story Awards**
The Star Newspaper; The Newcastle Herald
- **The Newcastle Poetry Prize – ABC 1233**
- **Writer-in-Residence Nikki Gemmell:**
The Newcastle Herald
- **The Café Showcase program – ABC 1233**
and The Star Newspaper
- Individual members eg. Mark Liston (*left*)

Café Showcase Project

Director Karen Crofts had an exciting idea in 2012: to exhibit the poetry and prose works by HWC members as ‘placemats’ between cutlery in cafes of Newcastle (right) It seems this has not been done anywhere else in the world. This was a publishing opportunity for members and was embraced by Goldberg’s and Longbench Cafes. Over 70 works by members were submitted to the Café Showcase project which ran for a week.



Feedback:

*I've just spent a pleasant hour roaming from table to table at Goldberg's and Longbench, reading, drinking, eating. Some excellent material there. **Bev Henwood***

*The Cafe Showcase project was great fun and very well received by the coffee drinkers of the area, and well publicised on ABC radio. **Julie Simpson***

From The Star Newspaper:

Cafes are a new display space for Hunter writers

By LEE TOBIN

Oct. 15, 2012, 5:23 p.m.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Hunter Writers Centre director Karen Crofts and Shortland writer Josh Croft read one of the placemats at Goldberg's.

Full article:

<http://www.newcastlestar.com.au/story/398636/cafes-are-a-new-display-space-for-hunter-writers/>



Summer Short Story Competition

HWC member Rosemarie Milsom approached HWC in her capacity as senior journalist at the Newcastle Herald. The Summer Short Story Competition was launched in December 2012 and was a terrific end to the year with January 2013 seeing the 25 shortlisted stories published in the Newcastle Herald. Right: HWC member Bev Henwood's story shortlisted and published in the Newcastle Herald



From Our Members:

From Andrea Apitz

My experience at HWC has been fantastic. I have enjoyed the courses that have been offered, they are well thought out and have helped broaden my writing skills. I have also enjoyed attending the interviews with the Writers-in-Residence.

From Ted Bassingthwaighte

This is my second year of membership of the Hunter Writers Centre. I have participated in all on offer at the HWC, short courses, writing groups and as a volunteer at the Newcastle Writers Festival. My membership of HWC has ignited my passion for writing to the point I feel confident and able to complete my writing projects.

From Kim Ross

I have been a member of the HWC since 2007, I have seen it evolve over the last couple of years, and I must say, without this centre Hunter based writers wouldn't have as many opportunities to peddle their work. The writing courses, workshops, poetry and writing groups are a godsend. It's wonderful to be with and sharing your innermost workings with some many likeminded and caring writers. And, if it was not for the HWC Litlink Mentorship Programme I would have missed out on one of the most valuable and rewarding mentorships of a lifetime or made as many new and wonderful friends.

From Bev Henwood

The work of the Hunter Writers' Centre is effective, building collaborative relationships with relevant individuals and organisations, offering, opportunity, encouragement and inspiration to all comers. Well done all concerned!

From Sheree Kable

I joined the Centre early this year, and it has proved to be invaluable to my development as a writer, even in the brief time I've been associated with it. I have attended a fortnightly prose group for most of the year which has been an excellent vehicle for gaining confidence in short form prose, and has also provided valuable feedback on a novel I have in development. I have been able to attend a number of workshops, including those on non-fiction narratives and reviews, which have been excellent as well as being affordable, which have provided other writing avenues and improved my prose writing generally.

The HWC took the initiative this year to run the first Newcastle Short Story Award with the City Council, an excellent counterpart to the Newcastle Poetry Prize, partly sponsored by the University, and was an excellent way of raising the profile of our city.

From Julie Simpson

Throughout 2012 I have been a member of the Saturday morning Poetry Workshop group run by our cafe poet Mark Liston. This is a most productive and energetic group where we crit each other's work and obviously improve our own poetry. I have found it most helpful and the work I have submitted to competitions since I joined the group has done well.

The Newcastle Poetry Prize has grown to be the major event of our poetic year and the standard gets better and better. It desperately needs enough funding to keep this important competition going, not to mention the enjoyable events that surround it.

The HWC also brings distinguished writers and their workshops to us. (e.g. major poet Mark Tredinnick) and two more writers-in-residence programs have already been arranged for 2013. We cannot help but learn from these experienced writers.

I have had an opportunity to submit my work to a number of free writing projects I would not have known about without newsletters from the HWC. One was the Cafe Showcase project which was great fun, very well received by the coffee drinkers of the area, and well publicised on ABC radio. Another was the Newcastle Herald's Summer Stories Competition, especially as I learned yesterday that I am one of the finalists. It is important that we have a centre that keeps us in touch with such writing opportunities.

The HWC at the Lock-up is a wonderful meeting place (and displays interesting art exhibitions as well). It has become part of our literary scene and as Newcastle writers are regarded highly throughout Australia, it is most important that we have a "home" in Newcastle.

From Lucy Woollard

My personal involvement has given me the opportunity to:

- Write a backing narrative for a slide show of the June 2007 Newcastle floods, commissioned for a commemorative business networking occasion
- Facilitate the 2011 Wordsmith Project which assisted a group of writers to move towards self publication.
- Attend numerous writing development events organised by the HWC
- Participate in the ongoing 'Writer in Residence' programs and receive expert advice on my own work. Other highlights for 2012 have included:
- The launch of the first Newcastle Short Story Award in partnership with Newcastle City Council
- Budgeted administration of the 31st Newcastle Poetry Prize. This included collaboration with the University of Newcastle to provide prize money sponsorship.
- Partnership involvement in the upcoming 3 day, Newcastle Writers Festival, to be held in April 2013 - a new initiative organised by Rosemarie Milsom.
- Ongoing creative writing programs in local schools

From Jean Kent

For the last 16 years I have been a member of the Writers Centre. It has been my local touchstone as I have developed from an 'emerging' poet to an established writer, with books published and distributed internationally.

The support and encouragement provided by the community of writers that the HWC has gathered together has been invaluable to me. It has given me a network of colleagues, as well as providing critical resources for my development.

Through the HWC, I was able to attend workshops by acclaimed authors such as Marion Halligan (fiction and non-fiction) and Jan Owen (poetry): these stimulated and stretched me as a writer, helped me hone my craft, and also made me more aware of what was required to be successful as a published writer. For new and emerging writers, this sort of contact with established authors can offer the breakthrough they need to move from the local scene to the wider world

As it is not really possible for a writer to make a living solely from writing in Australia, these visiting writers also benefit from the HWC's program by obtaining some paid employment. It is highly likely that their residencies will lead to Newcastle and The Hunter featuring in their own future writing, so as well as nurturing new talent, they will more than repay us with this immortalizing of our region!

I have been fortunate myself in being offered employment running workshops and providing mentorships. Again, the benefits are manifold. The money I've earned has given me more time for my own work, and the contact with new writers has been stimulating and exciting to witness.

There are many other ways in which the HWC has been important to my writing life: its newsletters and resources regarding publishing opportunities; its recent Café poetry project; its exciting ventures in the last year into social media, with a lively website and inviting Facebook page ... All of these are vital for writers of all ages and levels of development.

The last aspect of the HWC's work I wish to comment on is the Newcastle Poetry Prize. On the literary map of Australia, through this prize, Newcastle is now known worldwide for its championing of poetry. The Newcastle Poetry Prize is the jewel every poet would love to claim. My own poetry career was given a marvelous boost in 1981, when I had the great good fortune of being included in the prize's anthology.

This anthology is so important: there are other prizes which offer money, but the Newcastle Prize is the only one that publishes an anthology of short-listed poems. Each year, this book is a historical gem: a record of the best poetry currently being produced in Australia.

The involvement of the HWC in the administration of this prize is crucial. It is a massive job, and the work of the Writers Centre in keeping the prize thriving over the last 31 years should be applauded.

The Hunter Writers Centre has nourished my writing life for the last 16 years. In the last year, it has shown new energy and enthusiasm for encouraging writing in our local area and I hope that it will continue to be able to do this.